

# **An Armenian Reformer in Khrushchev's Kremlin**

*Anastas Mikoyan and the Politics of Difference in the USSR, 1953-1964*

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of  
Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Pietro Annanias Shakarian  
Graduate Program in History

The Ohio State University  
2021

Dissertation Committee

Professor David L. Hoffmann, Advisor  
Professor Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Advisor  
Professor Scott C. Levi  
Professor Claudia Buchmann

*Revised edition, 21 May 2021*

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## **Abstract**

Veteran Soviet statesman and longtime Politburo member Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan (1895-1978) is perhaps best known in both the West and the post-Soviet space as a master of international diplomacy. Less well-known is the pivotal role that Mikoyan – once a loyal Stalinist – played in dismantling and rejecting the authoritarian Stalinist state after the death of Iosif Stalin in 1953. Mikoyan served as the Kremlin’s leading reformer on nationality matters under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) during the Thaw (1953-1964). A native son of Sanahin, Armenia, he believed that the ethnic diversity of the USSR was a strength that should be embraced, not a danger that needed to be suppressed. This study contends that Khrushchev’s nationality policy, as guided by Mikoyan, represented a significant departure from the state violence and centralization characteristic of Stalin’s approach toward nationalities during the height of his power.

That departure was reflected in Mikoyan’s work in several ways, including (1) the rehabilitation of repressed cultural leaders among nationalities; (2) Mikoyan’s expressed effort to combat both national nihilism and national chauvinism; (3) patronage for nationality republics (as seen in Mikoyan’s work in Armenia); (4) the use of historical narratives to enforce aspects of the nationality policy; (5) the return of deported North Caucasus nationalities; (6) the development of a new nationality policy in the 1961 CPSU Party Program; and (7) the drafting of a new constitution advocating greater devolution to national republics, emphasizing their rights vis-à-vis Moscow.

*In memory of Stephen F. Cohen (1938–2020), scholar, mentor, friend*

## **Acknowledgements**

It would be difficult to imagine this dissertation without the indispensable assistance and support of several individuals and institutions. It is to them that I owe a deep debt of gratitude for the support that brought this dissertation to completion.

At The Ohio State University, I was extremely fortunate to have the encouragement and support of the Department of History. First and foremost, I am indebted to my co-advisors David L. Hoffmann and Nicholas B. Breyfogle for their assistance and input. Dr. Hoffmann's historical focus on the Soviet period most closely mirrors my own and he has greatly encouraged my research as a friend and mentor. Likewise, Dr. Breyfogle's guidance and expertise on Russia as a multicultural space has been indispensable for the development of this study. I am greatly appreciative for the time that both gentlemen have spent reviewing my chapters. Further, I am deeply thankful to Scott C. Levi for his sharp insights and support for my dissertation work. While conducting research abroad, I was in regular contact with all three gentlemen to discuss my progress and research findings.

In addition, during my time at Ohio State, I have benefited from my work with Greg Anderson, both in his position as my professor for historiography and in his former capacity as Graduate Studies Chair. I am likewise very appreciative of the assistance from Graduate Studies Coordinator, Ashley Bowerman, who has been exceptional during the dissertation process, especially in its final months. Finally, one cannot think of Ohio State's History Department without the indispensable Rhonda Maynard and Laura Seeger, two ladies whose support and love for the department's graduate students knows no limits. Outside of the History Department, I must also express my great thanks to Eileen Kunkler of Ohio

State's Center for Slavic and East European Studies for her assistance, especially in coordinating my FLAS funding applications and language programming.

Prior to Ohio State, my journey toward the realization of this project commenced with earlier studies at various universities in the Great Lakes region. At John Carroll University in Cleveland, I must thank Jim Krukones, my first professor in Russian history, for encouraging my interest in studying one of the most remarkable parts of the world. His insights, saturated with a wonderfully wry sense of humor, have helped me immensely through this process. Following my time at John Carroll, I greatly benefited from my years as a graduate student at the University of Michigan. It was in Ann Arbor, under the tutelage of Ronald Grigor Suny, Olga Maiorova, and Alaina Lemon, that I enhanced my knowledge of the Soviet nationality question and completed my Master's thesis, laying the groundwork for this current study.

Additionally, I am greatly indebted to my various teachers in Russian and Armenian at different universities and institutions. In particular, I must mention my teacher of Eastern Armenian – Hripsime Haroutunian at the University of Chicago, whose courses I attended through the remote language learning program at Ohio State. I had some knowledge of Armenian in my youth, but it was Dr. Haroutunian's courses that gave me a clear, formal understanding of Eastern Armenian. Even beyond these courses, she became a good friend and mentor who later invited me to give talks about my research for students at the University of Chicago. In addition, I am indebted to Tatyana Bystrova. Between degrees, I enrolled in Russian translation courses under her tutelage at Kent State University. I thank her for imparting to me the necessary skills and tools that enabled me to produce all the translation work that made this dissertation possible.

However, the one person to whom I also owe particular gratitude is the late historian, Stephen F. Cohen of New York University and Princeton University. His book *The Victims Return* fueled my interest in Mikoyan's role in de-Stalinization. Then, in May 2014, during my time as a graduate student at Michigan, it was Dr. Cohen who suggested to me the idea of writing an entire dissertation on Mikoyan. He was a close friend and mentor to me throughout this journey. Both he and his wife, Katrina vanden Heuvel, offered me invaluable support and assistance. At their New York apartment, amid deep conversations on all things Russian, Dr. Cohen even gifted me his personal copy of Mikhail Pavlov's biography of Mikoyan. Tragically, Dr. Cohen died on September 18, 2020 after a five-month battle with cancer. In one of our final communications, just weeks before his passing, I shared with him documents from the Russian State Archive (GARF) of Mikoyan's meeting with recently rehabilitated Baku Bolsheviks in March 1964. He was a scholar's scholar to the very end of his life. Although I was unable to share my dissertation with him as I had hoped, I am sure that he would be proud of me. I will be forever grateful to him, and it is to his memory that I have dedicated this dissertation.

My work in the archives of Russia and Armenia would have been impossible without the generous assistance of an American Councils Title VIII Research Scholar grant. During that time, I was assisted by many individuals, particularly Emily Lyons-Ellison and Marcus Smith in Washington, D.C., Nane Abrahamian and Ani Ayyvajyan in Yerevan, and Jon Smith in Moscow. In addition, I received assistance from those at my partner institution, Moscow International University, in particular my good friend Vladimir Alekseevich Supik. I am grateful to all these individuals for their guidance and help through this

process, and I am also grateful for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon for the very generous support during the final year of my dissertation writing.

Further, I am very appreciative to the many researchers and academics who guided me through my research, both here and abroad. In Armenia, I owe great thanks to several individuals, including Ashkhen Hakobyan, Vahram Kosakyan, Nelly Manucharyan, Sergey Minasyan, Hrant Mikaelian, Artem Yerkanyan, and the husband-and-wife team of Levon Abrahamian and Gayane Shagoyan. I am also grateful to the staff of the Armenian National Archives in Yerevan, in particular former Archive director Amatuni Virabyan, reading room specialists Vard Grigoryan, Hasmik Harutyunyan, and Tamara Tamanyan, and Kino-Foto Archive director Avag Harutyunyan. Additionally, I must also thank Tatev Vardanian of the Armenian National Library; Karo Vartanyan, Ofelya Udumyan, and Suzie Khojamiryan of the archive of the Charents Museum of Literature and Arts; Haykanush Aghbalyan, Lena Khechumyan, and Marine Rafaelovna of the Mikoyan Brothers Museum; and Anahit Asatryan and Gohar Charents of the Charents Memorial Museum.

In Russia, I am particularly indebted to the country's two leading specialists of the Caucasus – Sergey Markedonov and Vadim Mukhanov, both at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). I am also thankful to the staffs of the various archives in Moscow at which I worked – the Russian State Archive (GARF), Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), the Russian State Library, the National Library of Russia, and the State Public Historical Library of Russia. In particular, the indefatigable Aleksei Trefakhin of the GARF reading room expertly handled all my requests alongside those of others. I am also thankful to Liudmila



Kosheleva and Marina Astakhova of RGASPI for their support and assistance. Additionally, I was provided with copies of rare documents from scholar Sergey Filippov of *Memorial* in Moscow that researchers xeroxed in 1992 from the Russian Presidential Archive (APRF) and the Central Archive of the FSB (TsA FSB RF) during a very brief window of archival access. Outside of Russia and Armenia, I thank those who assisted me on acquiring much-needed books and materials through Inter-Library Loan in the United States, specifically Elaine Straka of the Cleveland Public Library and Tonya Johnson of Ohio State's Thompson Library.

Further, I owe much gratitude to various scholars and researchers in Western Europe and North America, in particular Samuel A. Casper, Alec Gevorkyan, Denis Kozlov, Maike Lehmann, Alex Marshall, Zhores Medvedev, Andreas Oberender, Serguei A. Oushakine, Etienne Peyrat, Ara Sanjian, Ara Sarafian, William Taubman, Alexander Titov, and Artyom H. Tonoyan. I am also thankful for those individuals who consented to be interviewed for this project, specifically Edward Djerejian, Mark Grigorian, Sergei Khrushchev, Vladimir Mikoyan, and Tatiana Shahumyan. Here I must especially recognize the exceptional warmth and kindness of the late Dr. Khrushchev's widow, Valentina Golenko, at the Khrushchev home in Cranston, Rhode Island. Also, Fred Weir, the Moscow correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor*, introduced me to his mother-in-law, Dr. Shahumyan. Last but certainly not least, I am greatly thankful to Vladimir Mikoyan, grandson of Anastas, for his assistance, knowledge, guidance, and friendship. In addition to his own recollections, he has provided me with the unpublished Russian-language manuscript of the memoirs of his father, Sergo Mikoyan, as well as numerous original photographs and materials.

Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of those whom I love most. During my time in Moscow, amid my assistance to the RGASPI reading room staff on an Armenian-to-Russian translation, I was very fortunate to stumble upon a most wonderful archival discovery – Ms. Olya Yudina. Ever since that time, she has provided me with unending inspiration, care, encouragement, and love on my journey toward dissertation completion.

Most importantly, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my parents, Berj and Carol Shakarian. Both are my pillars who have been there for me in every respect. By virtue of their own backgrounds and family histories, they were the ones who created the spark in me that grew into my passion for the history of Russia, Armenia, and Eurasia. Upon noticing my strong curiosity in this part of the world as a plucky West Side Cleveland kid, they fueled my interest with books, invaluable intellectual exchanges, and loving generosity. I am not sure that I could ever top them, but I will forever remember their love, encouragement, and contribution to my growth as an academic and as a young man.

## Vita

- 2012 ..... B.A. (John Carroll University, Cleveland, OH)  
2013 ..... M.L.I.S. (Kent State University, Kent, OH)  
2015 ..... M.A. (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI)

## Publications

“Haze Over Ararat: The Role of Environmentalism in the Rise of National and Civic Movements in Soviet and Post-Soviet Armenia, 1975 – Present,” *Gomidas Institute Armenian Forum Online* (May 2013).

## Fields of Study

Major Field: History

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## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

**AO** – *Autonomous oblast'*

**ARF / ARF-D / Dashnaktsutyun / Dashnaks** – *Armenian Revolutionary Federation*

**Armkom** – *Armenian Committee of the Bolshevik Party*

**ASSR** – *Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic*

**CPSU (Russian: KPSS)** – *Communist Party of the Soviet Union*

**druzhiba narodov** – *Friendship of peoples*

**Glavvoentorg** – *General Directorate of Military Trading Enterprises*

**Gosplan** – *State Planning Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR*

**Gulag** – *Labor camp administration system*

**Hunchaks** – *Armenian Social Democrat Hunchakian Party*

**Kavburo** – *Caucasus Bureau of the Russian Communist Party*

**Kolkhoz** – *Collective Farm*

**kolkhoznik(i)** – *collective farmer(s)*

**Komsomol** – *Communist Youth League*

**krai** – *territory*

**NEP** – *New Economic Policy*

**NPNSC** – *Nationality Policy and National-State Construction*

**Obkom** – *Regional Committee*

**oblast'** – *province*

**OGPU / NKVD / KGB** – *Joint State Political Directorate / People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs / Committee for State Security*

**okrug** – *region (or electoral district)*

**ORPO** – *Department of Leading Party Organs*

**Orgkom** – *Organizing Committee*

**Politburo** – *Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party*

**Raikom** – *Local Committee*

**raion** – *district*

**Revkom** – *Revolutionary Committee*

**Sovkhoz** – *Soviet State Farm*

**Sovnarkhoz** – *Regional Economic Council*

**Sovnarkom** – *Council of People's Commissars*

**SFSR** – *Soviet Federative Socialist Republic*

**SSR** – *Soviet Socialist Republic*



## List of Archival Abbreviations

**APRF** – *Arkhiv prezidenta rossiiskoi federatsii*

(Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, Moscow)

**HAA** – *Hayastani azgayin arkhiv*

(National Archives of Armenia, Yerevan)

**GAT** – *Grakanutyun yev arvesti tangaran*

(Archives of the Museum of Literature and Art after Yeghishe Charents, Yerevan)

**GARF** – *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv rossiiskoi federatsii*

(State Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow)

**RGASPI** – *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii*

(Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, Moscow)

**RGALI** – *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva*

(Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts, Moscow)

**RGANI** – *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii*

(Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, Moscow)

**TsA FSB RF** – *Tsentral'nyi arkhiv federalnoi sluzhby bezopasnosti rossiiskoi federatsii*

(Central Archive of the Federal Security Service, Russian Federation, Moscow)

## Introduction

Veteran Soviet statesman and longtime Politburo member Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan (1895-1978) is perhaps best known in both the West and the post-Soviet space as a master of international diplomacy. Less well-known is the pivotal role that Mikoyan – once a loyal Stalinist – played in dismantling and rejecting the authoritarian Stalinist state after the death of Iosif Stalin in 1953. Mikoyan served as the Kremlin’s leading reformer on nationality matters under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) during the Thaw (1953-1964).<sup>1</sup> A native son of Sanahin, Armenia, he believed that the ethnic diversity of the USSR was a strength that should be embraced, not a danger that needed to be suppressed. This study contends that Khrushchev’s nationality policy, as guided by Mikoyan, represented a significant departure from the state violence and centralization characteristic of Stalin’s approach toward nationalities during the height of his power.

That departure was reflected in Mikoyan’s work in several ways, including (1) the rehabilitation of repressed cultural leaders among nationalities; (2) Mikoyan’s expressed effort to combat both national nihilism and national chauvinism; (3) patronage for nationality republics (as seen in Mikoyan’s work in Armenia); (4) the use of historical narratives to enforce aspects of the nationality policy; (5) the return of deported North Caucasus nationalities; (6) the development of a new nationality policy in the 1961 CPSU Party Program; and (7) the drafting of a new constitution advocating greater devolution to national republics, emphasizing their rights vis-à-vis Moscow.

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<sup>1</sup> This study refers to “the Thaw” according to the definition articulated by Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd, i.e., the watershed moment in Soviet history following Stalin’s death in 1953, characterized by a “new pluralism of opinions and media” as well as an “intense exchange of ideas, greater personal security, and higher living standards.” See Kozlov and Gilburd, “The Thaw as an Event in Russian History,” in *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. Kozlov and Gilburd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 25.

Mikoyan's ideas in the realm of nationality policy were a crucial part of Khrushchev's reforms, which represented a selective but wide-ranging (and politically risky) attempt to reject Stalinist methods and policies. He firmly believed that the best possible future for the development of the USSR's various national groups was within the Soviet socialist framework. From his perspective as an Armenian and as a non-Russian, multi-ethnicity and Soviet socialism were inextricably intertwined. The spirit of his approach toward the nationality issue was perhaps best articulated in the speech that he delivered in the Armenian capital Yerevan on March 11, 1954. In it, he effectively foreshadowed the countrywide process of de-Stalinization and underscored the necessity of a flexible policy toward Soviet nationalities – two policies that preoccupied him for the remainder of his life and career.<sup>2</sup> In that address, the statesman argued for a policy of managed national expression, condemning both “national nihilism” (i.e., indifference to the concerns of Soviet nationalities) as well as national chauvinism (i.e., an aggressive sense of pride and superiority of one national group over another).<sup>3</sup> The idea was not new in the context of longer history of the Soviet nationality policy. Nevertheless, Mikoyan gave it new life during the Thaw, beginning with his speech in Yerevan.

After laying out his vision for the Thaw-era nationality policy in Yerevan, Mikoyan moved to implement it as Khrushchev's point-man in the nationality realm. The policy,

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<sup>2</sup> This study uses the term “de-Stalinization” to refer to the anti-Stalin policies pursued by the Soviet government during the Thaw. Officially, Soviet leaders referred to this campaign as “the struggle against the cult of personality.” For additional discussions on the term and idea of de-Stalinization, see Polly Jones ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006), Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), and Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga goroda Erevana, 11 mart 1954 goda* [Speech at the Voter Meeting of the Yerevan-Stalin Electoral District of Yerevan, 11 March 1954] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1954), 42-43.

which harkened back to earlier variations of the Soviet nationality policy, was based on two principles – state unity and a respect for ethnic and cultural diversity. The state would discard policies that advocated for assimilation or centralization in favor of those advocating for greater political and economic devolution and cultural expression among non-Russian nationalities. For example, at Mikoyan’s insistence, the concept of the merger (*sliianie*), or assimilation, of smaller nations into larger ones was officially abandoned by the state. This concept was based on the Marxist dialectical idea that national differences would cease to have any relevance with the realization of communism, and that the Soviet nationality policy was a step toward the inevitable process of a merger.<sup>4</sup> This idea was substituted by Mikoyan with that of the rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) of nations. Instead of assimilation, the *sblizhenie* idea advocated coexistence among the various Eurasian ethnic groups and respect for local cultures within the framework of a united Soviet state.

Another feature of the Thaw-era nationality policy was the tendency toward greater decentralization from Moscow to the republics, including greater political and economic devolution.<sup>5</sup> In the view of Mikoyan and other reformers in the Soviet leadership, decentralization not only formed a key component of the rejection of the Stalinist legacy, but also held the promise for a more democratic and representative brand of Soviet socialism. Stalinist state violence and mass repression were also rejected, with the

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<sup>4</sup> Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>5</sup> The issue of economic devolution was raised by Mikoyan and others involved in the Subcommittee for Nationality Policy and National-State Construction (NPNSC) for the 1960s Soviet constitutional reform effort. However, Khrushchev had experimented with economic devolution earlier with the *sovnarkhoz* reform. For different evaluations of it, see Nataliya Kibita, “Moscow–Kiev relations and the *Sovnarkhoz* reform,” and Valery Vasiliev, “Failings of the *Sovnarkhoz* reform: The Ukrainian experience,” in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 94-111 and 112-132.

rehabilitation of deported nationalities like the Chechens and Ingush, or the rehabilitation of cultural figures like Yeghishe Charents, Aksel Bakunts, or Gurgun Mahari.

However, while stressing decentralization and a greater space for national expression, the Khrushchev government also emphasized the importance of the unity of the state. Consequently, it worked to check those national or cultural expressions it deemed “anti-Soviet” or threatening to state unity, echoing Mikoyan’s 1954 articulation of the dual struggle against “national nihilism” and “national chauvinism.” This approach formed the foundation for the “tug of war” that developed between Moscow and the republics during the Thaw, as both sides struggled to agree upon which forms of national expression were acceptable and which were not.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Moscow’s nationality policy had its limitations, with Mikoyan’s lofty ideas often clashing with more complicated political realities. The state’s inability to address the longstanding grievances of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh represented one such case. Another was the government’s decision to allow for the return of certain nationalities (e.g., the Ingush or Balkars) but not others (e.g., the Crimean Tatars or Volga Germans). Sometimes the Stalinist legacy complicated the state’s aims at redressing past wrongs, as the Ingush-Ossetian territorial dispute over the Prigorodnyi District demonstrated. Most significantly, the approach toward the nationality policy favored by Mikoyan was contested and it did not find universal approval among Kremlin elites. Mikoyan’s struggle to secure the removal of the *sliianie* concept from the 1961 CPSU Party Program reminds us of this reality, as does the struggle of the Chechens and Ingush to realize the restoration of their republic.

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<sup>6</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie Kivelson, *Russia’s Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 330.

The study of Mikoyan's contributions to the development of the Thaw-era nationality policy is also a study of the politics of difference. As historians Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper have written, this notion of a "politics of difference" could be interpreted differently by different empires and multiethnic states. "In some empires," they wrote, "[it] could mean recognizing the multiplicity of peoples and their varied customs as an ordinary fact of life; in others it meant drawing a strict boundary between undifferentiated insiders and 'barbarian' outsiders."<sup>7</sup> Of these two models of managing difference, the former might be described as "inclusive" and the latter as "exclusive." The "inclusive" model generally fit the USSR/Russia throughout most of its history, but particularly in the Thaw years. For Mikoyan, difference was "a fact and an opportunity, not an obsession."<sup>8</sup> As this study illustrates, his ethnic background and origins from one of the most ethnically and confessionally diverse regions of the Russian Empire profoundly affected his outlook toward governance in multicultural societies. As Burbank and Cooper stress, empires could "profit from skills and connections developed by distinct communities."<sup>9</sup> As an Armenian, Mikoyan's intimate understanding of the Caucasian context, his connections to that world through Armenia and Baku, and his experience in managing difference in the North Caucasus all proved to be beneficial for Khrushchev's nationality policy during the Thaw.

Mikoyan's favored approach to managing difference in the vast multiethnic Soviet state falls into the category that political scientists have dubbed "territorial pluralism," i.e., a style of governance "aimed specifically at the accommodation of distinct ethnic,

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<sup>7</sup> Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 12.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

linguistic, religious, cultural, and national communities.”<sup>10</sup> However, due to the Communist Party’s monopoly on power in the USSR, some scholars of territorial pluralism have dismissed the Soviet federal model as a form of “sham federalism,” i.e., representative on paper but not in practice.<sup>11</sup> In fact, as Chapter 5 documents, the work of the constitutional subcommittee on Nationality Policy and National-State Construction (NPNSC) reveals that Soviet federalism and Soviet politics were much more dynamic than these scholars assumed. The subcommittee, which was chaired by Mikoyan and included the First Secretaries of Armenia, Georgia, and Uzbekistan, took into consideration not only questions about the self-governance of nationalities, but also questions about the fundamental nature of the Soviet state structure. Ultimately, the members of the subcommittee, led by Mikoyan, were grappling with centuries-old questions regarding the ways in which Russia/USSR as a multiethnic state should be governed. Should the state be centralized? If not, how much power should be delegated to the union republics? What kind of state is the Soviet Union – a federation, a confederation, or a union state? How does one govern the multicultural state? Should the republics be allowed to secede? Should certain autonomous republics (like Tatarstan or Yakutia) be elevated to the status of union republics (like Armenia or Georgia)? If so, what should be the criteria? What benefits and obligations should the state provide to each type of national community within the country?

Mikoyan’s efforts to answer these questions and others are reflected in each chapter of this study. Chapter 1 argues that his March 1954 Yerevan speech was a policy speech that provided the framework for the Thaw-era Soviet nationality policy. In that address,

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Simeon, “Introduction,” in *Territorial Pluralism: Managing Difference in Multinational States*, ed. Karlo Basta, John McGarry and Richard Simeon (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 1.

<sup>11</sup> John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, “Territorial Pluralism,” in *Territorial Pluralism*, 34.

he also called for the rehabilitation of the futurist Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents, a victim of Stalin's Great Purges.<sup>12</sup> By invoking the name of Charents, Mikoyan helped to enable the process of the post-Stalin rehabilitation of former "enemies of the people," including national cultural figures, and helped set the stage for Nikita Khrushchev's broader re-assessment of Stalin two years later, at the XX Party Congress. Moreover, the speech became symbolic as a starting point for the Thaw in Soviet Armenia. The chapter grounds these developments in Mikoyan's participation in Stalin's Purges in Armenia and his associated guilt. Subsequent chapters demonstrate the ways in which he worked to develop his 1954 nationality policy framework during the Thaw.

Chapter 2 follows Mikoyan's efforts to invoke historical narratives to help enforce his ideas in the context of the Soviet Caucasus. It argues that these efforts constituted one of many possible responses from Moscow to the rising demands for greater national expression during the Thaw. The narratives that Mikoyan invoked about Armenia aimed at promoting a hybrid "Soviet Armenian" identity, reconciling Armenian national feelings with Soviet ideology. The narratives that he invoked about the Baku Commune and the 26 Baku commissars sought to strengthen coexistence among the various ethnic groups of the Caucasus region. It also contends that Mikoyan's invocations of the commissars had relevance beyond the nationality policy. In his 1964 meeting with rehabilitated Baku Old Bolsheviks, Mikoyan tied the fate of the Baku 26 with the victims of Stalinism, thus making the narrative relevant to contemporary Thaw-era struggles over de-Stalinization.

Chapter 3 examines Mikoyan's efforts to highlight his native republic as a model of Soviet success in the nationality sphere, and the ways in which those efforts cultivated

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<sup>12</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 42-43.



his Armenian patronage network. Specifically, it argues that Mikoyan fostered this network by acting as both an advocate for Yerevan in Moscow (i.e., by securing funding for major economic projects) and as an advisor (i.e., offering feedback and ideas to Armenian officials for the republic's development). This chapter challenges arguments defining the Soviet state as an "empire," by highlighting Mikoyan's collaborative and deferential relationship with Armenian leaders, blurring the lines of hierarchies and distinctions.<sup>13</sup> It also demonstrates the limitations of Mikoyan and his network, specifically in relation to the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. Finally, it argues that welcoming celebrations for Mikoyan in Armenia constituted an interaction between projections of Soviet state power and expressions of local Armenian national sentiment.

Chapter 4 examines Mikoyan's role in the rehabilitation and return of nationalities deported by Stalin to Central Asia during World War II, in particular the Chechens and the Ingush. It argues that the return of these peoples to their native lands and the restoration of their autonomous republics became a highly contested issue within the Soviet leadership. While reform-minded officials like Mikoyan favored the return of these peoples, security officials such as KGB Chief Ivan Serov consistently opposed such initiatives. Ultimately, it demonstrates that bottom-up pressures from the deported peoples forced Moscow to take action to restore their autonomous entities. This chapter also contends that the legacy of Stalin's deportations had a direct bearing on the subsequent challenges that the Kremlin encountered in rehabilitating the Chechens and the Ingush, notably regarding territorial and property disputes. All these developments are grounded in Mikoyan's earlier work with these peoples as First Secretary of the North Caucasus in the 1920s.

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<sup>13</sup> Burbank and Cooper and Suny and Kivelson argue that the USSR constituted an empire, based on hierarchies, distinctions, and power relations.

Finally, Chapter 5 deals with Mikoyan's contributions to the nationality platform of the Third CPSU Party Program and his chairmanship of the NPNSC Subcommittee of Khrushchev's constitutional reform commission of the 1960s. It argues that Mikoyan's work on both of these Thaw-era reform efforts indicates a general trend toward more, not less, political decentralization on the part of the Khrushchev government. It contends that the 1958 educational reform and the purge of "national communists" in republics like Latvia both represented only temporary policy trends, while the overall trend of the early 1960s favored greater devolution. Drawing on the discussions and debates of the NPNSC Subcommittee, it also asserts that internal political debates over Soviet federalism were much more dynamic than Western scholars previously assumed. As these discussions reveal, Mikoyan and his fellow committee members proposed constitutional changes that, if implemented, would have dramatically reshaped power relations between Moscow and the republics, and even between the republics and autonomous entities.

## **Historiography**

This dissertation contributes to the study of Russia/USSR as a multiethnic, multi-confessional space, a topic of analysis that has flowered since the dissolution of the Soviet state in 1991 in what scholars have dubbed the "imperial turn" in Russian/Soviet studies. Since that time, critical exploration of Soviet nationality policy has focused primarily on the earlier decades of Soviet history, from the era of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) to the end of Stalinism.<sup>14</sup> Only recently have scholars proceeded to move beyond the

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<sup>14</sup> For examples of such works, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the*

decades after Stalin's death, facing a new question – how did Soviet nationality policy change and evolve in the decades following Stalinism?

Those scholars who have delved into the nationality issue during the Thaw have attempted to grapple with this question primarily by examining it from the perspective of the republics in relation to Moscow. Among such studies was the 2017 volume *Georgia after Stalin*, edited by Timothy Blauvelt and Jeremy Smith.<sup>15</sup> Drawing on documents from the Georgian and Russian archives, the authors of this work sought to examine the Thaw-era nationality policy from the vantage point of Georgia, paying particular attention to the 1956 Tbilisi riots. As one might expect from a specific examination of one republic, the authors of this collection concluded that “the dynamics of national identity and nationalism are driven by a number of factors which are independent of the policies of Moscow.”<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, historian Michael Loader has examined the post-Stalin nationality policy in the context of the rise of the “national communists” in Latvia and their defeat by local hardliners who sought to push back against *korenizatsiia*-style policies.<sup>17</sup> His valuable studies collectively arrive at the same conclusions as the Blauvelt-Smith volume on Georgia, i.e., that issues regarding nationalism and national identity were primarily driven

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*Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 414-452, Peter Blitstein, “Stalin’s Nations: Soviet Nationality Policy between Planning and Primordialism, 1936-1953.” (PhD diss., University of California-Berkeley, 1999), Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), and Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Timothy K. Blauvelt and Jeremy Smith, eds., *Georgia after Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet Power* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Smith, “Was There a Soviet Nationality Policy?,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, no. 6 (July 2019): 8.

<sup>17</sup> Loader’s contributions to our knowledge on the development of the Soviet nationality policy in Latvia are extensive. Some notable examples include Loader, “A Stalinist Purge in the Khrushchev Era? The Latvian Communist Party Purge, 1959–1963,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 96, no. 2 (April 2018): 244–282; Loader, “The Death of ‘Socialism with a Latvian Face’: The Purge of the Latvian National Communists,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 48, no. 2 (July 2017): 161–181; and Loader, “Restricting Russians: Language and immigration laws in Soviet Latvia, 1956–1959,” *Nationalities Papers*, 45, no. 6 (September 2017): 1082–1099.

by local factors. However, Loader admirably went even further by attempting to analyze the guiding approach toward the nationality policy from the center as it related to Latvia. His study on the “New Course” of Lavrentii Beria (1899-1953) toward the nationality issue argues for its importance within the post-Stalin power struggle between Beria and Khrushchev.<sup>18</sup> In his insightful work on Ukraine, William Risch has similarly identified the significance of Beria’s attempts to use the nationality policy to advance his position in the post-Stalin power struggle.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, it is clear from the writings of both Loader and Risch that although Beria, in tandem with Khrushchev, implemented a series of nationality reforms, these actions alone did not constitute a coherent policy and in fact were intended to achieve short-term political aims. In contrast to Mikoyan in 1954, Beria did not articulate a guiding philosophy or framework toward the nationality issue.<sup>20</sup> For example, it is unclear what position (if any) Beria held in relation to the *slivianie* concept.

As noted earlier, Chapter 5 of this dissertation argues that the overall trend from Moscow was toward more, not less, decentralization. This argument speaks to earlier conclusions among scholars about the evolution of the Thaw-era nationality policy. In seeking to identify Moscow’s nationality policy in the wake of Khrushchev’s 1958 educational reform and the defeat of Latvia’s “national communists,” some historians, notably Risch, Loader, and Gerhard Simon, have argued that the Kremlin became less tolerant of political decentralization by the early 1960s.<sup>21</sup> This argument was first advanced

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Loader, “Beria and Khrushchev: The Power Struggle over Nationality Policy and the Case of Latvia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68, no. 10 (December 2016): 1759-1792.

<sup>19</sup> William Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 20.

<sup>20</sup> Significantly, in their study on Russia as a multicultural space, Suny and Kivelson do not offer any evaluation or even discussion of Beria’s “New Course” when reflecting on developments after Stalin’s death (see Suny and Kivelson, *Russia’s Empires*, 329-330).

<sup>21</sup> William Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 22; Michael Loader, “The Centre-Periphery Relationship during Khrushchev’s Thaw: The View from Latvia,” *Peripheral Histories*, January 7, 2017,

by Robert Conquest, who contended that the 1961 Party Program constituted a “wide-ranging rebuff” toward local aspirations, and even a “provocation” toward them by indirectly expressing Moscow’s supposed intention to “gradually dissolve the separate republics.”<sup>22</sup> Simon, Risch, and Loader echo this argument, perceiving Khrushchev’s policies of the late 1950s and early 1960s as aiming towards the “eventual assimilation into one larger community” and therefore legitimizing “the Russification of non-Russian nationalities.”<sup>23</sup> However, the evidence of Mikoyan’s work on the Third Party Program and the NPNSC Subcommittee indicates that, far from being a rejection of local aspirations, these reform efforts represented an official rejection of Russification by the CPSU.

Indeed, a better explanation for the rollback against *korenizatsiia*-oriented leaderships in republics like Latvia is that it constituted part of the larger “tug of war” between centralization and self-governance that began to emerge during the Thaw. Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie Kivelson noted that, within the new environment of the Thaw, this “tug of war” constituted a struggle between Moscow and local republican elites who “began to test the limits of what [the center] would tolerate.”<sup>24</sup> This phenomenon has been identified by several other historians as well, most notably Jeremy Smith and Krista Goff.<sup>25</sup> However, the interpretations of Smith and Goff differ on the “tug of war” as it related to Azerbaijan. Smith argued that Azerbaijan was representative of the broader structural

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<https://www.peripheralhistories.co.uk/post/the-centre-periphery-relationship-during-khrushchev-s-thaw-the-view-from-latvia> (accessed March 15, 2021); and Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy towards the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarianism to Post-Stalinist Society*, trans. Karen Forster and Ostwald Forster (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 245-258.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Conquest, *Russia After Khrushchev* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 207.

<sup>23</sup> William Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Suny and Kivelson, *Russia’s Empires*, 330.

<sup>25</sup> See 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*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 79-93; and Krista A. Goff, *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 106-109.

pattern in which republican elites represented both the Soviet state and their titular communities, and that these two interests that occasionally clashed.<sup>26</sup> By contrast, Goff contends that, although significant, republican-center clashes “only tell part of the story of how Azerbaijan ‘became Azerbaijani’ over the midcentury decades of the twentieth century.”<sup>27</sup> This study enhances these discussions, not only by introducing the element of Soviet official policy toward this phenomenon, but also by uncovering the fact that the future direction and nature of the post-Stalin nationality policy was highly contested among the Soviet leadership at the highest levels.

This dissertation also contributes to the historical literature on Moscow’s efforts to use of Soviet republics as models for developmental success. Indeed, Mikoyan viewed economic development as an indicator of the successes of the Soviet nationality policy, and, as Chapter 3 illustrates, he sought to highlight his native Armenia as a model for Soviet success in the nationality sphere to audiences foreign and domestic.<sup>28</sup> On the foreign front, Mikoyan and Armenian leaders were especially mindful about projecting this image to the worldwide Armenian Diaspora. As such, this dissertation complements Kalinovsky’s *Laboratory of Socialist Development*, in which he argues that the Khrushchev government used Tajikistan’s economic development as a model for projecting its influence in the developing countries in the Global South.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, in Chapter 5 of his *Muslim and*

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<sup>26</sup> Smith, “Leadership and nationalism in the Soviet Republics,” 85.

<sup>27</sup> Goff, *Nested Nationalism*, 109.

<sup>28</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *USSR: A United Family of Nations*, trans. David Skvirsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 58-69

<sup>29</sup> Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

*Soviet*, Eren Tasar makes the case that Moscow employed the Central Asian *muftiate* to similar effect, as a tool of influence in international affairs.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to these scholars, there are also those who have addressed aspects of the post-Stalin nationality policy in their research, even if the nationality issue was not the main focus of their arguments. For example, scholar Alexander Titov, addressed the nationality issue in his study of the CPSU Party Program, which he argued was “the main ideological document up to the end of the Soviet period.”<sup>31</sup> This study supports that argument and enhances it by offering new archival evidence on the role of Mikoyan in the formulation of the program’s platform on the nationality issue. It also enhances the discussion of the development of the Party Program offered by historian Jukka Renkama in his study on Otto Kuusinen’s reform efforts during the Khrushchev era.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, Vladimir Kozlov explored aspects of the nationality issue in his study of mass uprisings in the post-Stalin USSR, in which he argued that “unresolved social and ethnic contradictions” resulted in “specific ‘signals’” by Soviet citizens to the state as expressed by “mass riots, spontaneous uprisings, and ethnic disturbances.”<sup>33</sup> In his work, he examined ethnic conflicts in the “Virgin Lands” of Kazakhstan, the 1958 Grozny riots, and the 1956 Tbilisi riots.<sup>34</sup> Kozlov’s studies of the Grozny riots and the ethnic unrest involving Chechens and Ingush in Kazakhstan represent the most complete exploration of

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<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 5 of Eren Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Titov, “The 1961 Party Programme and the fate of Khrushchev’s reforms,” in *State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Illic and Jeremy Smith (London: Routledge, 2009), 8.

<sup>32</sup> See Jukka Renkama, *Ideology and Challenges of Political Liberalisation in the USSR, 1957–1961: Otto Kuusinen’s ‘Reform Platform’, the State Concept, and the Path to the 3rd CPSU Programme* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Vladimir Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, trans. Elaine McClarnand Mackinnon (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 5.

<sup>34</sup> See Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR*, 72-86, 87-111, and 112-135.

those disturbances in any language. This dissertation enhances those earlier examinations by providing more precise context with regard to the central state policy toward the nationality issue, and the circumstances surrounding the return of deported nationalities and the Grozny riots specifically. It also clarifies Mikoyan's role in the return and rehabilitation of the repressed nationalities, building not only on Kozlov's work, but also on the work of Alex Marshall in his discussions of rehabilitation process of the deported peoples of the North Caucasus.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the lack of apparent evidence indicating any centrally guided policy, Jeremy Smith has even argued that, in fact, no concrete Soviet nationality policy existed at all after Stalin's death.<sup>36</sup> However, Smith's argument should be comprehended not so much as a concrete conclusion, but more as a challenge to other scholars to identify a centrally planned policy that, without the evidence and context, appears wholly absent since the 1930s, and particularly and glaringly since the end of Stalin's death. Smith offers good arguments that challenge the existence of such a policy. For example, given that state policies naturally evolve over long historical periods, he understandably finds the argument that the Soviet nationality policy did not change significantly after the 1930s to be wholly unconvincing. "If nationality policy," he wrote, "which affected the lives of, arguably, a majority or at least a large minority of the Soviet population, was unchanged while these other major determinants [i.e., other Soviet state policies] were shifting around them, then this fact of exceptional constancy itself is worthy of further investigation and comment (of

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<sup>35</sup> For Marshall's discussion on the rehabilitation and return of repressed North Caucasus nationalities, see Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London: Routledge, 2012), 285-292.

<sup>36</sup> For the full article, see Smith, "Was There a Soviet Nationality Policy?," *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, no. 6 (July 2019): 1-23.



which to date there is none).”<sup>37</sup> I agree with Smith’s contention. State policies do naturally shift over the *longue durée* of history. As this dissertation reveals, the Soviet nationality policy was no exception. Khrushchev’s government did indeed have a nationality policy, and it was Mikoyan who played a key role in its development.

In addition to these arguments, my study also challenges scholars who have theorized that one of the leading causes for the breakup of the USSR was its inability to manage its vast ethnic diversity. Some scholars contend that the consolidation of nations under Soviet rule created the conditions that led to nationalist mobilization under *perestroika*, and that a supranational Soviet identity (i.e., a sense of identification with the Soviet state and socialist ideology) ultimately failed to take hold among the populace.<sup>38</sup> However, subsequent research on the internal dynamics of the Soviet Union has contested such assertions. In her research on post-Stalin Soviet Armenia, historian Maike Lehmann contends that the Soviet experience led to the emergence of a hybrid identity in the national republics, fusing together an all-Union Soviet (i.e., state and socialist) identities with a national identity (i.e., a sense of belonging to a specific ethnic, national, cultural, or ethno-religious community). She calls this phenomenon “Apricot Socialism,” referring to “yet another variation of the revolutionary red in the Soviet everyday.”<sup>39</sup> Specifically she noted that “the apricot, being the Armenian national fruit, whose skin often samples the whole

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<sup>37</sup> Smith, “Was There a Soviet Nationality Policy?,” 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> Mark Beissinger’s *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Ronald Grigor Suny’s *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

<sup>39</sup> In reference to other “shades” of Soviet red, Lehmann also identifies “Vera Dunham’s pink and orange lampshades reflecting the tastes of the late Stalinist elite” and “Alexei Yurchak’s allegory of pink and purple as the true colors of communism for late Soviet Komsomol activists.” Maike Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism: The National Past, the Soviet Project, and the Imagining of Community in Late Soviet Armenia,” *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 13.

color spectrum between crimson red and light orange, serves me as a metaphor for how people in Soviet Armenia imagined the rules and goals of the Soviet community.”<sup>40</sup>

To be sure, such identities were constructs or “imagined communities” in the words of Benedict Anderson.<sup>41</sup> However, although “imagined,” they nevertheless came into existence as tangible forms of self-identification, whether they represented subjective senses of belonging to “national communities” (e.g., Armenians) or “state and socialist communities” (e.g., Soviets). In Lehmann’s argument, these identities blended in the Soviet era to form a “very Soviet hybrid of national and socialist elements.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in his *Familiar Strangers*, historian Erik Scott identifies a similar phenomenon among the Georgians, arguing for the role of Georgians as active agents in the development of the Soviet state.<sup>43</sup> My research concurs with the findings of Lehmann and Scott, maintaining that Soviet and national identities not only constituted a hybrid Soviet-national identity, but also actively influenced the course of Soviet politics, as the case of Mikoyan illustrates.

With regard to Mikoyan’s 1954 Yerevan speech, this work also complements those of other scholars of Armenia’s Soviet past who have recognized the significance of the speech, most notably Mary K. Matossian, Ronald Grigor Suny, and Razmik Panossian.<sup>44</sup> In particular, Matossian was the first to acknowledge this significance and the possibility of Mikoyan’s direct involvement in Armenia’s de-Stalinization process, which this study

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<sup>40</sup> Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism,” 13.

<sup>41</sup> For Anderson’s full arguments, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism,” 13.

<sup>43</sup> Erik R. Scott, *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>44</sup> Mary K. Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 201; Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 181-182; and Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 288-289.

has confirmed with materials from the Russian and Armenian archives.<sup>45</sup> It also expands upon Razmik Panossian's discussions of Mikoyan's speech, its relationship to Armenian nationalism in the Soviet context, and even its important implications for the vision of the post-Stalin nationality policy.<sup>46</sup> In addition, this dissertation argues for the place of Mikoyan's speech as an important historical moment heralding the beginning of the Thaw in Armenia. The subsequent flowering of greater Armenian national expression culminated in the 1965 Yerevan demonstrations and eventually in the 1988 Karabakh movement.<sup>47</sup> As Panossian noted, "the Yerevan protests [of 1965] did not occur in a vacuum" and "were a product of the post-Stalin thaw and the slow emergence of national issues in the late 1950s and early 1960s."<sup>48</sup> The impact of the 1954 speech on modern Armenian history cannot be underestimated.

Significantly, this study is the first of its kind to place Mikoyan's speech in the broader context of his role in de-Stalinization, about which many scholars of Russia and the Soviet Union have written.<sup>49</sup> It especially complements the work of historian Samuel

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<sup>45</sup> Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies*, 201.

<sup>46</sup> Panossian, *The Armenians*, 288-289.

<sup>47</sup> The 1965 Yerevan demonstrations were spontaneous mass rallies in Yerevan for recognition of the 1915 Armenian Genocide on its 50th anniversary. The 1988 Karabakh movement was the *perestroika*-era popular movement advocating for the unification of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) with Soviet Armenia. For the best overview of the 1965 Yerevan demonstrations, see Maïke Lehmann, "Apricot Socialism," 9-31. For the best overview of the 1988 Karabakh movement, see Mark Malkasian, "*Gha-rabagh!*": *The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996). For an overview of these events in the greater context of Armenian history, see Panossian, *The Armenians*, 319-323 and 384-388.

<sup>48</sup> Panossian, *The Armenians*, 323.

<sup>49</sup> For examples, see Stephen F. Cohen, *The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag After Stalin* (Exeter, NH: PublishingWorks, 2010), 89-91; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 241-246; Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century* (London: Verso, 2016), 246-247; Roy Medvedev, *Oni okruzhali Stalina* [They Surrounded Stalin] (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1984), 163-166; Mikhail Pavlov, *Anastas Mikoyan: Politicheskii portret na fone sovetskoi epokhi* [Anastas Mikoyan: Political Portrait in the Context of the Soviet Era] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2010), 269-295; Kathleen E. Smith, *Moscow 1956: The Silenced Spring* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 32-46; and William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 278.

Casper, who has extensively studied Mikoyan's role in the rehabilitation of former "enemies" in 1953-55. Casper noted in his work that, in the immediate aftermath of Beria's execution in December 1953, Mikoyan began to receive numerous requests for rehabilitation from members of his Caucasian (specifically Bakuvian) revolutionary circle, which he identifies as Mikoyan's patronage network.<sup>50</sup> Casper is on-point in making this case, but this dissertation contends that it only forms part of the story. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, Mikoyan not only had a Bakuvian/Caucasian network, but also an Armenian network, which included the republic's highest officials. In that respect, this study also complements Nikolai Mitrokhin's work on Thaw-era patronage networks generally.<sup>51</sup> In addition, although Casper does not reflect extensively on Mikoyan's 1954 speech, he nevertheless identifies its immediate impact, noting that the number of rehabilitation requests that Mikoyan received increased greatly in April 1954, a month after his speech exonerating Charents in Yerevan.<sup>52</sup> Overall, by bringing discussions on the importance of Mikoyan's speech in Armenian historiography, together with discussions on Mikoyan's central role in de-Stalinization in Russian/Soviet historiography, this dissertation hopes to present the most complete picture of these critical historical events.

Additionally, this study addresses the issue of contested historiography in the post-Soviet space generally and in the Caucasus specifically. Since 1991, citizens of the various post-Soviet republics have debated the legacy of the Soviet past. Mikoyan's legacy was no exception in that context. In Armenia, Mikoyan as a historical figure has recently

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<sup>50</sup> Samuel A. Casper, "The Bolshevik Afterlife: Posthumous Rehabilitation in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1953-1970" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2018), 44.

<sup>51</sup> Nikolai Mitrokhin, "The rise of political clans in the era of Nikita Khrushchev," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 26-40

<sup>52</sup> Casper, "The Bolshevik Afterlife," 54.

become the subject of an intense historiographical discussion, prompted by a debate over a 2014 proposal to erect a Mikoyan statue in Yerevan. Those who opposed the statue highlighted Mikoyan's role in the Purges on the order of Stalin. Those who supported the statue highlighted Mikoyan's role in international politics and diplomacy, notably the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, neither side reflected on Mikoyan's contributions to the development of the Soviet Armenian state, nor did they acknowledge his role in de-Stalinization both in Soviet Armenia and the USSR generally. Instead, both supporters and opponents of the statue painted an overly simplified portrait of the man, devoid of any nuance in a zero-sum political game.<sup>53</sup> Hayk Demoyan, the former Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, went so far as to accuse supporters of the Mikoyan statue for being "pro-Stalin," even though Mikoyan's contributions to de-Stalinization were wide-ranging.<sup>54</sup> Overall, this study will complicate that image of Mikoyan for both sides of that debate, by exploring his contributions to the Soviet nationality policy, de-Stalinization, and the development of Soviet Armenia.

## **Biographical Method**

This work on Mikoyan is only the beginning of a larger project toward a complete political biography. The latter can be defined as an account of the life of a historical figure written by another individual, highlighting that figure's major contributions to the course of history. This genre contrasts with microhistory, which can be defined as "the intensive historical investigation of a relatively well-defined smaller object, most often a single

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<sup>53</sup> Gayane Shagoyan, "Between Memory and Memorial: Anastas Mikoyan and 'Social Lustration' in Armenia," *Caucasus Analytical Digest* no. 80 (16 February 2016): 2-4.

<sup>54</sup> Hayk Demoyan, "New Stalinist Cult in Armenia?," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, September 21, 2017 (accessed March 3, 2018).

event, or ‘a village community, a group of families, even an individual person’.”<sup>55</sup> Indeed, if biography is “largely founded on a belief in the singularity and significance of an individual’s contribution to history,” then “microhistory is founded upon almost the opposite assumption: however singular a person’s life may be, the value of examining it lies in how it serves as an allegory for the culture as a whole.”<sup>56</sup>

Guided by a biographical method, this study examines Mikoyan as a historical figure to get at much broader questions about Soviet history, just as Stephen F. Cohen’s biography on Nikolai Bukharin did 50 years ago.<sup>57</sup> Through the historical figure of Bukharin, that work challenged academic assumptions about the nature of Soviet history, showing that there were alternatives to the path of Stalinism. This study charts a similar course, using the historical figure of Mikoyan to explore the mechanics of governance in the vast multiethnic Soviet state in the crucial period following Stalin’s death. However, this work is not a microhistory, in the genre of Willard Sunderland’s *The Baron’s Cloak*.<sup>58</sup> Mikoyan’s political career and his contributions to the Soviet nationality policy take center stage over broader interpretations of Soviet society and culture. Mikoyan was not an ordinary, but rather an extraordinary historical figure and his contributions to the Soviet system helped define the course of Soviet history. The story of his leading role in developing the post-Stalin nationality policy takes us through the 10-year period of the Thaw, examining various reforms, policy approaches, and outcomes. It serves as a

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<sup>55</sup> Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Sziujártó, *What is Microhistory?: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013), 4.

<sup>56</sup> Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History*, 88, no. 1 (June 2001): 133.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

<sup>58</sup> Willard Sunderland, *The Baron’s Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

foundation for a broader examination of Mikoyan as a political figure, which will also eventually encompass deeper examinations of his other contributions to the Soviet state.

Mikoyan's leading role in the Thaw-era nationality policy is only one piece of his broader biographical puzzle. From his Armenian youth in Sanahin, he fought in the battalion of Armenian General Andranik Ozanian during the First World War, only to become a convinced Bolshevik revolutionary. Alongside his mentor and friend Stepan Shahumyan, Mikoyan became involved in the short-lived Baku Commune. After a stint in Nizhnii Novgorod, he served as First Secretary of the North Caucasus in the 1920s, before assuming one of his most renowned roles in charge of trade and food supply. A member of Stalin's inner-circle, he became a leader de-Stalinizer and reformer in the 1950s in his alliance with Khrushchev. In the foreign policy sphere, he juggled relations with the United States and China. He also played a key role in establishing ties with Fidel Castro's Cuba, only to later play another prominent role in helping to defuse the Cuban Missile Crisis. Mikoyan's role in the nationality policy is only the starting point toward a study of all these other facets of the statesman's life as a master survivor "from Il'ich to Il'ich."

Mikoyan's biography is indeed extraordinary, which makes it all the more tempting to overstate his accomplishments. Every biographer is at least somewhat guilty of this sin. Moreover, at times, I may also be guilty of overstating the role of Mikoyan in the development of the post-Stalin nationality policy. Nevertheless, I hope that, if anything, this study illuminates an important yet little-known aspect of Khrushchev's reforms and their significance to both Soviet and world history.

## Sources

This study is built on information from a variety of different sources – archival documents from Russian and Armenian archives, memoirs, personal interviews, and newspaper articles. From Russia, this study owes a great debt to the materials contained in Mikoyan’s personal fond (84) at the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) and the Mikoyan opis’ (120) of the Council of Ministers fond (5446) at the Russian State Archive (GARF) in Moscow. Other resources included the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), the Russian State Library, the National Library of Russia, and the State Public Historical Library of Russia. Additionally, this work draws upon copies of documents from the Russian Presidential Archive (APRF) and the Central Archive of the FSB (TsA FSB RF) provided to me by historian Sergey Filippov at the international society *Memorial* in Moscow. These documents were xeroxed by scholars at *Memorial* in 1992 during brief window of unprecedented archival access in the late Soviet Union and early post-Soviet Russia. From Armenia, this study draws on materials from the Central, Social-Political, and Film-Photography branches of the Armenian National Archives (HAA), as well as the National Library of Armenia in Yerevan and the Mikoyan Brothers’ Museum in Alaverdi. Regarding transliteration, this dissertation follows the Library of Congress transliteration system for both the Russian and Armenian languages, without character modifiers.

In the United States, this project would be incomplete without the superb collections of the Harlan Hatcher Library at the University of Michigan, the Cleveland Public Library in downtown Cleveland, and the William Oxley Thompson Memorial Library at the Ohio State University. Especially essential for this study were several



published compilations of Russian archival documents. These archival editions included *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti Stalina na XX s''ezde KPSS (The Report of N. S. Khrushchev on the Cult of Personality of Stalin at the XX Congress)*; *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962) (Restoration of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR)*; *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia (1944–2004) (The Ingush: Deportation, Return, Rehabilitation, 1944–2004)*; and volumes one and two of the *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo (Rehabilitation: How It Was)* series, among others.<sup>59</sup>

Memoirs have also proven to be essential in piecing together the historical puzzle of Mikoyan. These include Mikoyan's own memoirs, which have proven to be fairly reliable, and which largely correspond with the archival record of Mikoyan in the materials held at GARF, RGASPI, and RGANI, as well as the accounts of other memoirs. For example, Mikoyan's account of his reaction to the full scale of Stalin's Purges during the Thaw is also reflected in statements that he made during his 1964 meeting with rehabilitated Old Bolsheviks in Baku, the transcript of which is held in GARF.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, his reflections on Russian-Armenian relations and the 1915 Armenian Genocide also

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<sup>59</sup> Karl Eimermacher, ed. et al. *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti Stalina na XX s''ezde KPSS: Dokumenty* [The Report of N. S. Khrushchev on the Cult of Personality of Stalin at the XX Congress: Documents], (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002); Dukuvakha Abdurakhmanov, Magomed Muzaev, Abdullah Bugaev, V. Shepelev, and Abbas Osmaev, eds. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962): Sbornik dokumentov i materialov, Tom I* [Restoration of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR: Collection of Documents and Materials, Vol. I] (Nalchik: Pechatny dvor, 2013); Iakub Patiev, ed. *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia, 1944–2004, Dokumenty, materialy, kommentarii* [The Ingush: Deportation, Return, Rehabilitation, 1944–2004, Documents, Materials, Commentary] (Magas: Serdalo, 2004); A. Artizov, Iu. Sigachev, V. Khlopov and I. Shevchuk, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy, Tom I: Mart 1953 – Fevral' 1956 gg.* [Rehabilitation: How It Was, Documents of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and Other Materials, Vol. I: March 1953 to February 1956] (Moscow: Demokratiia and Materik, 2000); and A. Artizov, Iu. Sigachev, I. Shevchuk, and V. Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy, Tom II: Fevral 1956 - nachalo 80-kh godov* [Rehabilitation: How It Was, Documents of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and Other Materials, Vol. II: February 1956 to the Beginning of the 1980s] (Moscow: Demokratiia and Materik, 2003).

<sup>60</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 15.

reflect those that he wrote in notes for his March 1954 Yerevan speech, also held in GARF.<sup>61</sup> These are just two examples of many in which Mikoyan's claims or ideas are corroborated or reflected in archival materials.

This research also draws on the memoirs of several other individuals, including Sergo Mikoyan, Nikita Zarobyan, Ruben Arushanyan, Olga Shatunovskaia, Sergei Khrushchev, Iunus Desheriev, and especially Anton Kochinyan and Yeghishe Astsatryan. Of these, the richest were the Armenian-language memoirs of Soviet Armenian officials, notably Kochinyan (*Anavart husher*, or *Unfinished Memoirs*) and Astsatryan (*XX dar. Hayastani karrutsman chanaparhin*, or *20th Century: On the Path Toward the Construction of Armenia*).<sup>62</sup> These works proved to be important not only as sources of information on Mikoyan's relations with the Armenian leadership, but also as accounts of Soviet history from the perspective of the "national" union republics. Both authors devoted entire chapters of their memoirs to Mikoyan's role as a patron for Armenia. Their writings often complement one another; where Kochinyan often leaves off, Astsatryan picks up and vice-versa. Their writings can be verified against the archival record, especially against those archival materials held at GARF and the Armenian National Archives.

At the same time, one must consider the great admiration that Kochinyan and Astsatryan had for Mikoyan, given that both were members of his Armenian patronage network. Therefore, although they describe actual historical events and verifiable realities, their sympathetic tone can at times drift into outright praise for a man who they considered to be a mentor, friend, and model statesman. The historical context in which they wrote

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<sup>61</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 327.

<sup>62</sup> Anton Kochinyan, *Anavart husher* [Unfinished Memoirs], ed. Vladimir Petrosyan (Yerevan: Heghinakayin hratarakut'yun, 2008), and Yeghishe Astsatryan, *XX dar. Hayastani karrutsman chanaparhin (Husher)* [20th Century: On the Path Toward the Construction of Armenia (Memoirs)] (Yerevan: Edit Print, 2004).

their memoirs must also be considered. Kochinyan's writings on Mikoyan date from November 1982, during the Soviet era, at the very end of Brezhnev's tenure and only a few years after Mikoyan had passed away. Although Kochinyan is quick to underscore the benefits of Soviet rule in Armenia, his decision to write about Mikoyan's role in the republic was potentially risky, especially in an era when the Brezhnev government sought to diminish Mikoyan's legacy, given his association with the disgraced Khrushchev. By contrast, Astsatryan wrote his memoirs after the dissolution of the Soviet state in 1991. While not constrained by potential state-imposed limitations, his assessments of the Soviet era in Armenia are positive, although not uncritical. In addition to these memoirs by Kochinyan and Astsatryan, one memoir that I used with particular caution was that of Nami Mikoyan, the wife of Mikoyan's son Aleksei, the adopted daughter of longtime Armenian First Secretary Grigorii Arutinov, and mother of rock star Stas Namin.<sup>63</sup> Although Nami's memoirs have parts that can be verified, other aspects of it are more questionable, and her narrative on Arutinov is troublingly devoid of any criticism.

In addition to Kochinyan, Astsatryan, and others, this work also draws on accounts of Soviet Armenia from anti-Soviet Armenian émigrés, particularly regarding Mikoyan's role in the Purges in Armenia in 1937. The documentary record leaves us only a few clues about Mikoyan's speech before the Armenian Party plenum on September 22, 1937. However, an anonymous anti-Stalinist Armenian émigré, writing under the pseudonym "Arman Haroot," provides perhaps the most detailed account of Mikoyan's speech and the proceedings surrounding it. The account was published in English translation in the autumn

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<sup>63</sup> Nami Mikoyan, *Svoimi glazami s liubov'iu i pechal'iu...* [Through My Own Eyes with Love and Sorrow]. (Moscow: SNC Publishing, 2018).

1951 edition of the *Armenian Review*.<sup>64</sup> More significantly, key elements of Haroot's account can be verified by the archival record of this episode, especially against the documentary materials held at GARF. For example, in his account, Haroot notes that, in his speech, Mikoyan invoked a key letter from Armenian First Secretary Amatuni Amatuni to Ashot Hovhannisyán, which ultimately led to Amatuni's downfall. The original 1927 letter is held at GARF in Mikoyan's opis' of the Council of Ministers fond.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to published sources, this work draws on several interviews conducted by the author in Russia, Armenia, and the United States. These include interviews with Vladimir Mikoyan (a former Soviet and Russian diplomat, grandson of Anastas, and son of Sergo Mikoyan); the late Sergei Khrushchev (scholar and son of Nikita Khrushchev); Tatiana Shahumyan (Russia's leading scholar of South Asia at the Russian Academy of Sciences, daughter of close Mikoyan associate Levon Shahumyan, and granddaughter of revolutionary Stepan Shahumyan); Mark Grigorian (director of the National Museum-Institute of Architecture after Aleksandr Tamanyan in Yerevan and grandson of Soviet Armenian architect Mark Grigorian); and Edward P. Djerejian (former US Ambassador to Syria and to Israel). I prepared all questions in advance and conducted almost all of these interviews in-person, in Moscow, Yerevan, or Cranston, Rhode Island. The only exception was the interview with Ambassador Djerejian, which I conducted remotely by telephone.

In addition, Vladimir Mikoyan has provided me with unprecedented access to his personal archive, including a complete copy of the largely unpublished memoirs of his late father, Sergo. These memoirs, entitled "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu" ("Anastas Mikoyan – A Life Devoted to the People"), reflect on Sergo's personal

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<sup>64</sup> Arman Haroot, "The Purges in Soviet Armenia," *The Armenian Review* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1951): 133-139.

<sup>65</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, ll. 20-22.

relationship with his father and his work and, as such, they have been an indispensable resource. Although Sergo wrote them at a time when he was seriously ill with leukemia, they still contain important information on his father's role in Armenian affairs and his approach to the Soviet nationality issue. Like the memoirs of Kochinyan and Astsatryan, they can also be verified against the materials in the archives and against other memoirs. Significantly, Sergo's memoirs cannot be deemed an uncritical work of filial piety. Although he clearly loved and admired his father, he reproached him for his complicity with Stalinism and his "naïve" support for the brief Bolshevik-Kemalist collaboration in the Caucasus. I owe a great gratitude to Vladimir Sergeevich for providing the final Russian manuscript of his father's writings, completed in autumn 2009, just months before he died of leukemia in March 2010.

A version of Sergo's text was published in Yerevan in 2007 in Armenian translation by Eduard and Svetlana Avagyan, under the title *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane (My Father Anastas Mikoyan)*.<sup>66</sup> The published Armenian translation is based on an earlier, shorter, and less detailed draft of "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaiia narodu". For instance, the unpublished Russian manuscript includes a more detailed discussion of Mikoyan's role in the realization of the Arpa-Sevan canal project, as recounted by Georgi Ter-Ghazaryants. However, the Armenian edition also includes certain sections that are not included in the completed Russian manuscript. These portions primarily deal with Sergo's relationship to Armenia, including the episode in which he was offered a position at the Russian-language newspaper *Kommunist* in Yerevan by the writer Hrachya Kochar. Sergo's reasons for removing these passages are unknown. However, from a historian's point of view, they

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<sup>66</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane* [My Father Anastas Mikoyan], trans. Eduard Avagyan and Svetlana Avagyan (Yerevan: Nairi, 2007).

are rich recollections that provide important insight on his father's involvement in Soviet Armenia. Therefore, I will be citing both the Russian manuscript and the Armenian translation throughout this dissertation. Preference will be given to the Armenian translation as it is a published source that can be verified by scholars. At the same time, it will be necessary to cite the Russian manuscript on episodes that are not covered in detail in the Armenian edition, such as Mikoyan's role in addressing the Sevan problem.

### **The Personal and the Historical**

Like all studies, this dissertation has been just as much a personal journey as it has been a historical one. As someone of Armenian background from Cleveland, my experiences with the Russian-speaking immigrant community of the city proved especially influential growing up. These experiences, along with my travels to Russia and Armenia, gave me the opportunity to observe firsthand how decades of Soviet state policies had led to the emergence of a common cultural language and identity among the various peoples of post-Soviet Eurasia, across national and confessional lines. Many of the new Armenian immigrants who arrived in Cleveland after the dissolution of the USSR freely mingled with Russians and other former Soviet immigrants, including Russian Jews, Ukrainians, Georgians, Uzbeks, and others. Russian grocery stores and delis, frequented by customers from various post-Soviet states, became manifestations of the old Soviet *druzhba narodov* ("friendship of peoples"), selling beloved treats from Yerevan to Vladivostok (not forgetting Brighton Beach!). Echoing Lehmann's thesis, this phenomenon further demonstrated the ways in which local "imagined" national identities continued to complement broader "imagined" regional identities.

The specific focus on Mikoyan was the culmination of a longstanding interest both in the Soviet statesman and in Armenia's Soviet past generally. The American press dubbed Mikoyan the great world diplomat, the "only man in the Kremlin with whom Washington could speak," the "Armenian wheeler-dealer," and "Mr. K's fix-it man." In January 1959, he flew to my native Cleveland where he met with liberal pro-détente businessman Cyrus Eaton and presented him with a troika (a three-horse-drawn sleigh) as a gift from Moscow. As a teenager, I read about how Mikoyan's "mustache twitched" and tears came to his eyes at the sight of Cleveland's Terminal Tower, which reminded him of the tower at Lomonosov Moscow State University.<sup>67</sup> Mikoyan also made similar stops in Chicago and Detroit. And when the Baku Bolshevik was not rubbing elbows with capitalists in Great Lakes metropolises, he was inspecting Macy's in New York, exchanging niceties with Jerry Lewis and Sophia Loren in Hollywood, or meeting with Ike in Washington. This history, combined with Mikoyan's Armenian background, fueled my interest. The eruption of the statue controversy in Yerevan in 2014, during my time as an MA student at the University of Michigan, further enhanced it. However, it was ultimately my late friend, mentor, and veteran Russia scholar Stephen F. Cohen who suggested the idea of writing a full dissertation on Mikoyan.

In the process of researching and writing this dissertation, history continued to move apace in the post-Soviet world in dramatic ways. In the tragedy of the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, one could hear clear echoes of the history that Mikoyan personally

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<sup>67</sup> George E. Condon, *Cleveland: The Best Kept Secret* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 1-5. See also Pietro A. Shakarian, "Cleveland visit 60 years ago this week of No. 2 Soviet official Anastas Mikoyan reflected a detente that served both nations well: Pietro A. Shakarian", *The Plain Dealer*, January 6, 2019, <https://www.cleveland.com/opinion/2019/01/cleveland-visit-60-years-ago-this-week-of-no-2-soviet-official-anastas-mikoyan-reflected-a-detente-that-served-both-nations-well-pietro-a-shakarian-opinion.html> (accessed March 9, 2021).

experienced – interethnic war between Armenians and Azeris, the rise of Turkish imperialism, and the importance of Russia’s role as regional referee. Similarly, in the recent discussions regarding the Russian constitutional reforms, one can hear echoes of the Soviet constitutional reform effort of the 1960s. In fact, the history of the 1960s Soviet constitutional reform can be instructive: (a) to observers abroad who want to understand the current reform process more clearly, and (b) to Russia’s own policymakers as they chart a new course in their country’s history. Regarding the latter, Mikoyan’s work on the nationality issue can be particularly informative, especially as questions arise concerning the core identity of the Russian state. As prominent voices within today’s Russian elite have clamored to accord special constitutional status to Russian Slavs as the “first among equals,” more sober voices have reminded them of the reality of today’s Russian Federation as a vast multiethnic country.<sup>68</sup> As this example and others highlight, the history of Mikoyan’s role in the development of the post-Stalin nationality policy has continued relevance for our understanding of Russian and post-Soviet politics.

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<sup>68</sup> Those more sober voices included one of Russia’s leading experts on the Caucasus, Sergey Markedonov, as well as other Russian scholars.



## Chapter 1: Yerevan 1954

On March 11, 1954, at the Spendiarov Opera Theatre in the Armenian capital Yerevan, Anastas Mikoyan delivered a consequential speech. In it, he articulated the essence of the Soviet nationality policy during the Thaw and helped to enable the process of the post-Stalin rehabilitation of former “enemies of the people.” The address set the stage for Nikita Khrushchev’s broader re-assessment of Iosif Stalin at the XX Party Congress in February 1956. As such, it held significance not only for Soviet Armenia, but also for the Soviet Union at large, and enjoyed widespread publication around the country.<sup>1</sup>

Mikoyan argued for a policy of managed national expression, coupled with controls to ensure that expressions of national sentiment did not veer into manifestations that were chauvinistic (i.e., advocating an aggressive sense of pride and superiority of one national group over another) or opposed to official Soviet ideology. “Bourgeois nationalism” was to be condemned, but the state needed to avoid what Mikoyan dubbed “national nihilism,” i.e., an indifference to national cultures and sensitivities. Although the idea itself was not new and harkened back to earlier variations of the Soviet nationality policy, Mikoyan nevertheless gave the concept new life during the Thaw. Additionally, it came to form part of the Khrushchev government’s broader rejection of Stalinist authoritarianism. However, although Mikoyan articulated the contrast between “national nihilism” and “bourgeois

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<sup>1</sup> Mikoyan’s full speech was published as a booklet by Gospolitizdat in Moscow in 1954, with a print run of 100,000 copies (see Anastas Mikoyan, *Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga goroda Erevana, 11 mart 1954 goda* [Speech at the Voter Meeting of the Yerevan-Stalin Electoral Okrug of Yerevan, 11 March 1954] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1954)). It was also published in the Russian-language Armenian daily *Kommunist* in Yerevan (see A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech’ tovarishcha A. I. Mikoyana” [“Speech of Comrade A. I. Mikoyan”], *Kommunist*, March 12, 1954, 2-4) and an abridged version, notably without Mikoyan’s invocations of Raffi, Patkanyan, Charents, and Myasnikyan, and without his call for a dual struggle against “bourgeois nationalism” and “national nihilism”, also appeared in *Pravda* (see A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech’ tovarishcha A. I. Mikoyana” [“Speech of Comrade A. I. Mikoyan”], *Pravda*, March 12, 1954, 3).

nationalism,” he did not offer specific details about these ideas. Moscow and the union republics struggled to define these concepts throughout the 1950s and 1960s, seeking to identify the parameters between those forms of national expression that were acceptable and those that were not in what some scholars have called a “tug of war.”<sup>2</sup>

The framework for approaching multi-ethnicity that Mikoyan articulated in Yerevan proved lasting and consequential. Through Mikoyan’s influence, it came to form the basis for subsequent nationality policy reform efforts by the Khrushchev government. It is no coincidence that the nationality platform of the 1961 CPSU Party Program is so strikingly evocative of the content of Mikoyan’s speech. Moreover, the program’s platform on nationality was then used as the basis for Mikoyan’s work as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Nationality Policy and National-State Construction (NPNSC), part of Khrushchev’s constitutional reform commission of the 1960s. The two basic principles that guided Mikoyan’s speech – state unity and a respect for ethnic and cultural diversity – also guided these later reform efforts, which represented a rejection of assimilationist tendencies within the CPSU.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in taking this approach, Mikoyan was informed by his background as a non-Russian within the Soviet leadership and by his identity as someone who was at once both Soviet *and* Armenian, a phenomenon that historian Maïke Lehmann called “Apricot Socialism.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more background, see Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie Kivelson, *Russia’s Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 330; 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*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 79–93; and Michael Loader, “The Rebellious Republic: The 1958 Education Reform and Soviet Latvia,” *Journal of the Institute of Latvian History*, 100, no. 3 (November 2016): 113–139.

<sup>3</sup> For further details on these reforms and their significance, see Chapter 5. Most prominent among them was the rejection of the merger (*sliianie*) concept in the Third CPSU Party Program.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of the idea of “Apricot Socialism,” see the introduction of this dissertation. For further information, see Maïke Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism: The National Past, the Soviet Project, and the Imagining of Community in Late Soviet Armenia,” *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 9–31.

Additionally, Mikoyan's speech was significant for its role in the process of enabling de-Stalinization and the rehabilitation of political prisoners through his call to rehabilitate the poet Yeghishe Charents, a victim of Stalin's Purges. After the arrest of Lavrentii Beria, Mikoyan began receiving several letters from those requesting the rehabilitation of loved ones – many of whom who had connections to Mikoyan's revolutionary Bakuvian/Caucasian network. Mikoyan's speech was intended as a signal indicating that not only would cases be reviewed, but also that it was possible for former "enemies" to have their names cleared of wrongdoing. Many historians of Russia and the Soviet Union have written about Mikoyan's role in de-Stalinization.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, many historians of Armenia have written about the significance of the 1954 speech as a starting point for the Thaw in the republic.<sup>6</sup> However, this study seeks to bring together both sides of the story to understand the ways in which the speech impacted the broader process of de-Stalinization and Mikoyan's role in it. In doing so, it seeks to place developments in Armenia in dialogue with broader Soviet history, thus highlighting its full significance. It will also trace the impact of the speech on the development of the processes of the Thaw

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<sup>5</sup> For examples, see Samuel A. Casper, "The Bolshevik Afterlife: Posthumous Rehabilitation in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1953-1970" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2018), 33-77, Stephen F. Cohen, *The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag After Stalin* (Exeter, NH: PublishingWorks, 2010), 89-91; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 241-246; Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century* (London: Verso, 2016), 246-247; Roy Medvedev, *Oni okružhali Stalina* [They Surrounded Stalin] (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1984), 163-166; Mikhail Pavlov, *Anastas Mikoyan: Politicheskii portret na fone sovetskoi epokhi* [Anastas Mikoyan: Political Portrait in the Context of the Soviet Era] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2010), 269-295; Kathleen E. Smith, *Moscow 1956: The Silenced Spring* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 32-46; and William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 278.

<sup>6</sup> For examples, see Mary K. Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 201; Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 181-182; and Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 288-289.

and de-Stalinization in Soviet Armenia, which, as Razmik Panossian argued, set the stage for the 1965 Yerevan demonstrations and the 1988 Karabakh movement.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter will commence with an exploration of Mikoyan's role in the Great Purge in Armenia in September 1937, on the orders of Stalin.<sup>8</sup> It was in the immediate aftermath of this earlier episode that Mikoyan assumed the post of a Supreme Soviet Deputy for Nationalities representing Yerevan. It would be from that position that Mikoyan would later deliver his March 11, 1954 speech. Perhaps even more significantly, his role as a participant in Stalinist state violence would go on to haunt Mikoyan, and this guilt reportedly informed his later de-Stalinization efforts, including his call to rehabilitate Charents. The chapter will further explore the immediate context of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, specifically as it related to changing interpretations of the Soviet nationality policy, political shifts occurring within Soviet Armenia, and Mikoyan's motivations for delivering the address. Mikoyan's speech will be critically explored, alongside his draft material and notes, stressing the final portion, entitled *Global Strengthening of the Friendship of Peoples*, dealing with the nationality issue. The final part of this chapter will examine the immediate impact of the speech on de-Stalinization and political developments in Armenia, specifically arguing that the speech both set the stage for Khrushchev's address at the XX Party Congress and signaled the start of the Thaw in the Armenian context.

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<sup>7</sup> Panossian, *The Armenians*, 323.

<sup>8</sup> This study uses the term "Great Purge" as opposed to "Great Terror." The term "Great Terror" was coined by Robert Conquest, and as historian David Hoffmann reminds us, such a name "implies that the purpose of the arrests and executions was to terrorize the population." In fact, as Hoffmann has written, "the arrests and executions of the mass operations were conducted in secret, and their purpose was to eliminate enemies, not to frighten people into submission," although "doubtlessly, Stalinist violence did terrorize victims and their families, and in fact Soviet leaders had no compunction about using terror." "In other words," he concludes, "these actions were not exemplary violence aimed at terrorizing the population. Instead they were forms of excisionary violence intended to eliminate specific segments of the population – those deemed potential traitors in the event of war." (David L. Hoffmann, *The Stalinist Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 108).

## Yerevan 1937

To understand Mikoyan's intervention in Armenian affairs in 1954 more fully, it is necessary to examine his earlier intervention in September 1937. At the time, Mikoyan was the People's Commissar of Food Production and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. He had little involvement in the affairs of Soviet Armenia, which was under the jurisdiction of the Transcaucasian SFSR, from the founding of the USSR to the Stalin constitution of 1936.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to those historians who assert that Mikoyan and Georgii Malenkov unleashed the Great Purge in Armenia, the Purges were in fact already in its active phase when Stalin dispatched Mikoyan to Yerevan.<sup>10</sup> It began in July 1936 with the death of popular Soviet Armenian leader Aghasi Khanjyan, whose local support base in Armenia presented a serious threat to the regional influence and power of Georgian First Secretary Lavrentii Beria.<sup>11</sup> Officially reported as a suicide at the time, his passing was later revealed to be the work of Beria in an official January 1956 Soviet investigation.<sup>12</sup>

A close friend of Khanjyan, the poet Yeghishe Charents saw the assassination at the hands of Beria as an ominous sign of the violence to come.<sup>13</sup> Khanjyan's death heralded

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<sup>9</sup> For a good overview of the history of the Transcaucasian SFSR, see Etienne Forestier-Peyrat, "Soviet Federalism at Work: Lessons from the History of the Transcaucasian Federation, 1922–1936," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge*, 65, no. 4 (2017): 529-559.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in his book *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait*, Miklós Kun contends that Mikoyan and Malenkov "had instigated a bloodbath in Armenia," even though the Great Purge had already been well underway under Amatuni and Mugdusi's leadership. The theory that Mikoyan and Malenkov independently "instigated" the Purges in Armenia also removes Stalin's agency. See Miklós Kun, *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait*, trans. Miklós Bodóczy and Rachel Hideg (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 290.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 156-157.

<sup>12</sup> A. Artizov, Iu. Sigachev, V. Khlopov and I. Shevchuk, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy, Tom I: Mart 1953 – Fevral' 1956 gg.* [Rehabilitation: How It Was, Documents of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and Other Materials, Vol. I: March 1953 to February 1956] (Moscow: Demokratiia and Materik, 2000), 314-316 and 41 n18.

<sup>13</sup> Anahit Charents, "Yeghishe Charents's Final Years: His Life and His Work from 1934-1937," in *Yeghishe Charents: Poet of the Revolution*, ed. Marc Nichanian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 86.

the rise of Armenian First Secretary Amatuni Amatuni and the feared head of the Armenian NKVD, Khachik Mugdusi. Allies of Beria (or “*stavlenniki Berii* [Beria’s creatures]” in the words of Roy Medvedev), Amatuni, together with his deputy Stepan Akopov and Mugdusi, unleashed a vicious campaign of state violence in Armenia from the time of Khanjyan’s death to the September 1937 intervention.<sup>14</sup> It was during this period that Armenia saw some of its most famous cultural figures become swallowed up by the Purges, including Charents, Vahram Alazan, Aksel Bakunts, Gurgen Mahari, and Vagharshak Norents, all of whom had been avowedly loyal to the Party and to the ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution. An atmosphere of pervasive fear gripped the republic as the Armenian NKVD worked to unmask and destroy real or imagined “enemies” of the Stalinist state. Mugdusi became especially infamous among Armenians for his penchant for cruelty and sadism.<sup>15</sup>

However, Amatuni and Mugdusi would make a fatal miscalculation when they targeted prominent Armenian Bolshevik Sahak Ter-Gabrielyan. Upon his arrest, Ter-Gabrielyan was harshly interrogated by Mugdusi and either jumped, or was pushed from, the fourth-floor window of the Armenian NKVD headquarters on Nalbandyan Street in Yerevan.<sup>16</sup> An eyewitness, who happened to be in the vicinity of the building, was

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<sup>14</sup> Roy Medvedev, *K sudu istorii. O Staline i stalinizme* [Let History Judge: On Stalin and Stalinism] (Moscow: Vremia, 2011), 283, and *K sudu istorii. Genezis i posledstviia stalinizma* [Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism] (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 401. For the English translation, please see *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, trans. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 413.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, in the ancestral village of former Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan (Tegh, near Goris in the Syunik Province), locals in 2015 recounted Mugdusi’s role in overseeing the Purges in their community, of which Sargsyan’s own grandfather, Avetis, became a victim. “Mugdusi was a rare bastard,” recounted one old man in the village. “Every single person hated and feared him at the same time.” For further information, see David Stepanyan, “We Had to Cheer when Serzh Sargsyan’s Grandfather was Taken Away”, *ArmInfo*, June 1, 2015, [https://arminfo.info/full\\_news.php?objectid=24F7DE10-082E-11E5-A8420EB7C0D21663](https://arminfo.info/full_news.php?objectid=24F7DE10-082E-11E5-A8420EB7C0D21663) (accessed May 7, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Mary K. Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 158. See also Eduard Melkonian, “Repressions in 1930s Soviet Armenia,” *Caucasus Analytical Digest* no. 22 (1 December 2010): 8.

reportedly arrested by the NKVD after identifying Ter-Gabrielyan.<sup>17</sup> However, the death of Ter-Gabrielyan, and the circumstances surrounding it, soon caught the attention of Stalin. Angered by the death and by the decision of the local leadership not to inform him about it, he dispatched Malenkov and Mikhail Litvin to Armenia to make the full force of the Soviet state felt on the Armenian Communist Party. As Khrushchev famously recalled, Malenkov was accustomed to “running errands” such as these for Stalin and others.<sup>18</sup> During this period, Stalin had dispatched him to oversee the brutal purge of local Party leaderships throughout the USSR, including in Soviet Belarus and various parts of the Russian SFSR, such as the Tatar ASSR.<sup>19</sup> Stalin’s decision to include Litvin, a close associate of Ezhov within the NKVD, was another natural choice.<sup>20</sup> Mikoyan, who was added by Stalin to the visiting delegation at the last moment, did not travel to Yerevan with Malenkov and Litvin, and would arrive later.

The plenum commenced on September 15 with the arrival of Malenkov and Litvin, accompanied by a team of NKVD interrogators.<sup>21</sup> Malenkov, who served as official chairman of the plenum, read aloud a letter by Stalin to the attendees, dated September 8.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Arman Haroot, “The Purges in Soviet Armenia,” *The Armenian Review* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1951): 137.

<sup>18</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Vol. 2: Reformer, 1945-1964*, ed. Sergei Khrushchev, trans. George Shriver (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), 202.

<sup>19</sup> Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin’s Team*, 127. See also Sergei Filippov, “9 podvigov tovarishcha Malenkova. Kak stalinskiy kadrovik zachishchal partiiu ot ‘starykh bolshevikov’” [The Nine Feats of Comrade Malenkov – How a Stalinist Personnel Officer Cleansed the ‘Old Bolsheviks’ from the Party], *Uroki istorii XX vek (International Memorial)*, June 12, 2019, <https://urokiistorii.ru/article/55837> (accessed May 18, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> One year later, Litvin would commit suicide in Leningrad, leaving the note “I can no longer take part in the murder of innocent people and the fabrication of spurious cases.” According to Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko, when Mikoyan heard the news of Litvin’s suicide note, “he muttered, ‘at least one honest man was found among that gang.’” (Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko, *The Time of Stalin: Portrait of a Tyranny*, trans. George Saunders, intro. Stephen F. Cohen (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 160.)

<sup>21</sup> A. Artizov, Iu. Sigachev, I. Shevchuk, and V. Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy, Tom II: Fevral 1956 - nachalo 80-kh godov* [Rehabilitation: How It Was, Documents of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and Other Materials, Vol. II: February 1956 to the Beginning of the 1980s] (Moscow: Demokratsiia and Materik, 2003), 586.

<sup>22</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 9.

“The Government of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU believe that the situation in Armenia, on an economic and Party and cultural level, is proceeding very badly,” wrote Stalin. He went on to detail that agriculture had “collapsed” and that “industrial enterprises under construction are in stagnation.” He further alleged that the Armenian Central Committee was misusing or stealing centrally distributed funds. “It is difficult to say where the money goes,” Stalin wrote. He also condemned cultural construction as “lackluster” and that Party work “had again deviated from the Party line.” He maintained that “the Trotskiists and other anti-Party elements are not adequately rebuffed by the Party leadership of Armenia.”<sup>23</sup>

On Ter-Gabrielyan’s death, Stalin was not timid at all in suspecting foul play and placed direct blame on the authorities in Yerevan:

Recent events, in connection with Ter-Gabrielyan’s ‘suicide,’ put into clear focus all the maximum rot and decay that characterizes the state of the Party and Soviet organizations in Armenia. It is hard to imagine that Ter-Gabrielyan jumped out of the window. It is completely inconsistent with his timid and pragmatic nature. It is much more likely that he was thrown out of the window to shut him up so that he could not expose the enemies of Soviet power. It is rather bizarre that the leadership of Armenia did not consider it necessary to inform the Council of People’s Commissars or the Party Central Committee about this incident. They apparently wanted to hide this flagrant fact and naively assumed that they could get away with it.<sup>24</sup>

Announcing that the Central Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars could “not allow the enemies of the Armenian people to walk freely in Armenia,” Stalin ordered the immediate arrest of Mugdusi and Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars

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<sup>23</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



Abraham Guloyan. Both men, Stalin asserted, “cannot but bear direct responsibility for all the outrages that have been revealed.”<sup>25</sup>

Stalin also tasked the visiting committee from Moscow, and primarily Malenkov, to investigate Armenian First Secretary Amatuni.<sup>26</sup> However, such an “investigation” was far from impartial. Stalin had already made up his mind that Amatuni was “guilty” and now he wanted Malenkov and Litvin to produce proof of his “treason.”<sup>27</sup> In a letter on the opening day of the plenum, he and Molotov wrote to Malenkov and Litvin that “we do not trust Amatuni and we consider him to be a Trotskiist. However, we should not arrest him just yet. We need to collect materials on him first.”<sup>28</sup> Until Stalin’s men “found” such evidence, the proceedings of the plenum focused on the “guilt” of Amatuni’s deputy Akopov instead.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Malenkov, who had just successfully brutalized the Tatar leadership in Kazan, wasted no time in doing what he did best. Following Stalin’s orders, he and Litvin immediately ordered the arrest of Mugdusi, as well as Gouloyan, Mugdusi’s deputy Ivan Gevorkov, and others.<sup>30</sup> Under arrest, Mugdusi – the once feared Armenian NKVD chief who interrogated Ter-Gabrielyan to his death – was now at the mercy of Malenkov and Litvin. Both participated personally in the interrogation of Mugdusi, in which they, together with the NKVD interrogators, violently beat him continuously until he finally began to confess to his manifold crimes.<sup>31</sup> In 1957, the former head of Armenia’s

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<sup>25</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, ll. 18-19.

<sup>26</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 586.

<sup>28</sup> Filippov, “9 podvigov tovarishcha Malenkova.” The document cited is held at TsA FSB RF f. 3, op. 4, d. 149, l. 66.

<sup>29</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, ll. 9-10.

<sup>30</sup> Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 586.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 587.

cotton trust, Arshak Hovannisyan, testified that to the CPSU Central Committee that he was also beaten by Malenkov, Litvin, and their NKVD men after his arrest.<sup>32</sup>

For his part, Stalin closely supervised developments from Moscow and advised his surrogates to arrest the First Secretary of the Abkhaz Raikom, Aleksei Agrba, and the Second Secretary of Azerbaijan's Central Committee, Atanes Akopov (no relation to Stepan), another Soviet official of Armenian origin.<sup>33</sup> The choice methods of Malenkov and Litvin soon yielded the desired results. In a report to Ezhov on September 25, Litvin wrote that Akopov revealed a vast Trotskiite network in Baku. Under grueling NKVD interrogation, he testified that both "the [Baku] Trotskiist organization and he personally, carried out wrecking against oil production, causing fires in the oil fields and more." He also admitted to being "a member of an anti-Soviet nationalist right-wing Trotskiist organization in Armenia and conducted wrecking sabotage and espionage work in various sectors of the national economy and in the Red Army" with a number of "accomplices," naming names of various individuals. Litvin also noted to Ezhov that "a significant number of active Dashnak emigrants, who had been at large, were revealed. We continue to carry out arrests."<sup>34</sup> On September 21, Ezhov ominously ordered Litvin to send Agrba and Akopov to Moscow "urgently."<sup>35</sup>

The plenum proceeded until September 18, when abruptly, at the suggestion of Malenkov, its work was interrupted for three days "in order to study a number of special issues."<sup>36</sup> The interruption was caused by the emergence of new evidence against Amatuni

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<sup>32</sup> Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 587.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 586.

<sup>34</sup> V. N. Khaustov, V. P. Naumov, and N. S. Plotnikova, eds. *Lubianka. Stalin i glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD. Dokumenty 1937-1938* [Lubianka. Stalin and the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD. Documents 1937-1938] (Moscow: Demokratsiia and Materik, 2004), 379-380.

<sup>35</sup> TsA FSB RF f. 3, op. 4, d. 149, l. 120.

<sup>36</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, ll. 9-10.

from the historian and statesman Ashot Hovhannisyanyan, who previously served as Armenia's First Secretary for much of the NEP period. Hovhannisyanyan was dismissed by the Soviet government from his post in 1927 for his alleged sympathies to "Specifists," group of Armenian socialists with pre-revolutionary origins who advocated tailoring socialism to Armenian national culture.<sup>37</sup> He was arrested on the orders of Amatuni's government earlier in 1937.<sup>38</sup> He now offered the visitors from Moscow incriminating and explosive materials about Amatuni's ideological transgressions. They included a letter that he claimed was written by Amatuni to Hovhannisyanyan in July 1927 in which he confessed his disagreement on the Party's approach to Specifism. Hovhannisyanyan also had a testimony that he wrote to the Deputy Head of the Department of Leading Party Organs (ORPO) of the CPSU Central Committee, regarding Amatuni's ideological vacillations from March 1937.<sup>39</sup> In it, he detailed Amatuni's alleged history of ideological deviations, dating back to his record of dissenting on Party positions during his studies at the Institute of Red Professors (IKP) in Moscow in the 1920s. He also wrote that "there were rumors" that he

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<sup>37</sup> According to Mary K. Matossian, "the Specifists might be best described as 'national marxists' rather than marxist nationalists"; like members of the Jewish Bund, their principal point of disagreement with the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks was on the issue of permitting the existence of autonomous ethnic units within the R.S.D.R.P. organization." Formed in 1903, the Specifists "never acquired a large following," but they nevertheless "represented a tendency of long-range significance: the tendency to demand greater consideration for national peculiarities in the implementation of overall social-democratic policies." (Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies*, 23-24 and 50-51).

<sup>38</sup> Despite his 1927 dismissal and his 1937 arrest, Hovhannisyanyan would later be rehabilitated by the Soviet government during the Thaw era (see Artizov, Sigachev, Khlopov and Shevchuk, *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom I*: 411n18).

<sup>39</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, ll. 20-22. Hovhannisyanyan's testimony read: "I consider it my duty to the Party to inform you of the facts concerning the current Secretary of the Central Committee of Armenian Communist Party, Comrade Amatuni. During the acute struggle against Trotskism in, if I am not mistaken 1924 (or perhaps a little later, in 1925), Comrade Amatuni had certain ideological vacillations of the Trotskii order... [He] declared to me frankly, out of respect for me as an elder comrade, that he had many doubts about the correctness of the Party line with respect to Trotskii. The conversation was brief and to the point. I resolutely declared to him that his doubts were groundless, that Trotskii disagreed with the Party on the fundamental, key questions of Leninism and that the urgency of the struggle against him was necessary." (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 20.)

left his position as the head of the Agitprop Department in Armenia in 1930 due to “some kind of irregular party line.”<sup>40</sup>

However, it was Amatuni’s July 1927 letter to Hovhannisyan that proved to be the most explosive and damning piece of evidence that Hovhannisyan had against him. In it, Amatuni wished Hovhannisyan well after his forced departure from the position of Armenia’s First Secretary. However, and even more critically, Amatuni – the same man who ruthlessly devastated his own people for even the slightest disagreement with the Party line – openly admitted his doubts about the approach toward Specifism within the Armenian Party.<sup>41</sup> Remarkably, he recommended that Hovhannisyan contact Khanjyan – even though it was Amatuni who used Khanjyan’s contacts with Hovhannisyan against him a decade later. The aim, Amatuni wrote, would be to “rally support” for Hovhannisyan, presumably in order for him to return to the position of First Secretary. Hovhannisyan thought this idea to be “strange.”<sup>42</sup>

Amatuni wrote his letter to Hovhannisyan with not only “deep respect,” but also with utmost discretion. Although “unsure” if he would receive an answer from Hovhannisyan, Amatuni wrote “but I still beg of you that it is only possible to write to me... If necessary, I promise not to disclose your thoughts. In general, I am ready to accept any condition, just to hear your true word about what is happening.”<sup>43</sup> For his part, Hovhannisyan claimed to have thought this “conspiratorial” tone of the letter to also be

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<sup>40</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 20.

<sup>41</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 22. Amatuni specifically wrote: “I would like to hear your assessment of the ongoing struggle within the Party organization of Armenia. I recall the debate about the so-called ‘Specifist’ movement even during the life of Comrade Myasnikov, in articles by Yerzikyan and you, the latter of which I had only heard about but did not get a chance to read. I think that there is a basis for serious disagreement. There are facts that speak against the Central Committee.”

<sup>42</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 21.

<sup>43</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 22.

“strange” at the time he received it in July 1927. His perception was heightened by its personal delivery to him through Amatuni’s associate, Gurgen Gomedin, and not through the mail. Although Amatuni “sought to receive an answer to the letter,” Hovhannisyan “left it unanswered” and, shortly after receiving it, he had “left Armenia altogether and forgot about Amatuni and his message.” Hovhannisyan urged the Armenian and All-Union Central Committees to give Amatuni’s letter a “proper assessment” and to “draw conclusions from it and all that is available to understand more about Amatuni and his Party characteristics.”<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, as storm clouds gathered over his head, Amatuni attempted to prove his fidelity and devotion to the Party. He chaired a regular session of the Armenian Politburo on September 19. The meeting highlighted incidents of supposed “sabotage” across the republic in connection with its economic failures in the agricultural and industrial spheres in the context of the second Five-Year Plan. The same issues were raised that same day when Malenkov met with members of the Armenian Party Central Committee Apparat, the Yerevan Party City Committee, and other Armenian Party officials. The discussion focused on developments across six raions in Northern Armenia – Alaverdi, Stepanavan, Amasia (on the Turkish border), Shamshadin, Ijevan, and Dilijan. The officials gave Malenkov the information that he expected and wanted to hear,

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<sup>44</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 21. In concluding his testimony, Hovhannisyan wrote: “I consider it my duty to note that the conspiratorial nature of the letter and its anti-Party orientation became clear to me only after the most recent meetings (that is, in the process of the counter-revolution by the Trotskiite center)... It was only Amatuni’s performance [of a speech in early 1937] in Yerevan to the Party *aktiv* that forced me to sort through the facts of the past in my memory. I reviewed my personal archive and came across Amatuni’s letter. I hesitated for a long time about how to deal with it... However, in the end, it became clear to me that I did not have the right to keep this message. It was necessary to notify the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party and the All-Union Soviet Communist Party about it. These bodies would give this letter a proper assessment in order to draw conclusions from it and all that is available to understand more about Amatuni and his Party characteristics.”

informing him about acts of sabotage, embezzlement, and “wrecking” by hidden “Dashnak” and “Trotskiite” networks in most of these raions. Some attributed these acts to “poor Party work,” while others, understanding the evolving direction of events, attributed them to the negligence of the Armenian Party leadership or the local NKVD.<sup>45</sup> “We must examine why the NKVD refused to arrest 16 Dashnaks [in Ijevan] and why these Dashnaks are still free,” one official told Malenkov.<sup>46</sup> In response, Malenkov encouraged local investigations into these incidents.<sup>47</sup> He also apparently notified Stalin about these allegations.<sup>48</sup> In the end, instead of helping Amatuni, these reports only added to the case against him as an unreliable leader.

On the following day, September 20, Mikoyan arrived in Yerevan to join Malenkov and Litvin.<sup>49</sup> His task was to speak before the plenum and “to sign on the spot” a list of individuals to be repressed that had been prepared by the Armenian NKVD with Moscow’s approval. “This, they said, would make the importance that the Central Committee attaches to pest control more convincing for the Armenian Communists,” Mikoyan wryly recalled.<sup>50</sup> The inclusion of Mikoyan was a last-minute addition by Stalin, who notified Malenkov

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<sup>45</sup> For the full record of the meeting, see HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 58, ll. 1-10.

<sup>46</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 58, l. 6.

<sup>47</sup> For example, in Stepanavan, Malenkov proposed setting up an investigative team to examine the problem with “Trotskiites” and “sabotage” in the area more closely. See HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 58, ll. 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> By the time Mikoyan arrived in Yerevan, Stalin already had knowledge of these allegations of “sabotage” in Armenia. He instructed Malenkov to update Mikoyan on the matter (see TsA FSB RF f. 3, op. 4, d. 149, l. 105).

<sup>49</sup> L. Denisova, ed. *Tragediia Sovetskoi Derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i Raskulachivanie, Dokumenty i Materialy, 1927–1939, Tom 5. 1937–1939, Kniga 1. 1937, The Tragedy of the Soviet Village: Collectivization and Dekulakization, Documents and Materials, 1927–1939, Vol. 5: 1937–1939, Book 1. 1937* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), 605n70. The documents cited are held at TsA FSB RF f. 3, op. 4, d. 149, ll. 85 and 105. Relying on the *protokoly* of the plenum, scholars previously assumed that Mikoyan had arrived with Malenkov and Litvin on September 15 but remained in the background during the first five days. For example, in her account, Sheila Fitzpatrick wrote that Mikoyan “discomforted by the presence of so many friends and clients,” decided to keep “as much as possible in the background at the party plenum and let Malenkov do the talking.” (see Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin’s Team*, 127).

<sup>50</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o Minuvshem* [So It Was: Reflections on the Past] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2014), 628-629.

and Litvin about it on September 17. Anticipating Amatuni's downfall, Stalin encouraged Malenkov to chat with Mikoyan about "the inevitable changes in the composition of the Armenian leadership and new candidates."<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that Mikoyan's visit was not publicized in the Soviet Armenian press and his role in purging the leadership was only publicly acknowledged by Soviet authorities at the end of the year when Mikoyan participated in the Supreme Soviet elections.<sup>52</sup> On the day of Mikoyan's arrival, Stalin instructed Malenkov to update him about incidents of "wrecking" in the republic. He also ordered Malenkov to return to Moscow on the day of Mikoyan's speech on September 22, not September 25 or 26 as he originally planned.<sup>53</sup>

Stalin's decision to involve Mikoyan was guided by his specific considerations for both the Soviet Armenian statesman and for the Armenian Party leadership. By including the most prominent Armenian political figure in the USSR, Stalin aimed to send a strong signal to the Soviet Armenian leadership from Moscow regarding Ter-Gabrielyan's death. However, he also wanted to test the loyalty of Mikoyan, who in fact had a history of being directly involved in saving, or attempting to save, many people from the repressions.<sup>54</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup> Filippov, "9 podvigov tovarishcha Malenkova." The document cited is held at TsA FSB RF f. 3, op. 4, d. 149, l. 85.

<sup>52</sup> See for example "Kauch'uki kombinati ashkhatoghneri voghjunum yen Enker Mikoyanin" ["Rubber Factory Employees Welcome Comrade Mikoyan"], *Khorhrdayin Hayastan*, November 11, 1937, 1, and "Haykakan khoh bolor ehntroghnerin" ["An Armenian Reflection to All Voters"] and "Avetik Abovyani voghjuyni khosk'e" ["The Welcoming Speech of Avetik Abovyani"], *Khorhrdayin Hayastan*, December 8, 1937, 2. In these pieces, the authors praised Mikoyan for his role in "exposing" and purging Amatuni, Akopov, Guloyan, Mugdusi and other "Dashnak-Trotskiite" and "Bukharinite" "enemies" on the "instructions of Great Stalin." See also the November 1937 letter of the Armenian Composers' Union to Mikoyan from GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 605, ll. 1-2 (figure 25).

<sup>53</sup> TsA FSB RF f. 3, op. 4, d. 149, l. 105.

<sup>54</sup> Well-known examples of Mikoyan's interventions include his colleague Napoleon Andreasyan, the Armenian poet Avetik Isahakyan, Armenian Marshal Ivan (Hovhannes) Baghramyan, and the Bonner family (Ruth Bonner's husband (and Elena's father) was Gevork Alikhanyan (Alikhanov), a fellow seminarian with Mikoyan at Echmiadzin). He also attempted to save Aleksei Snegov. For Mikoyan's interventions on behalf of Andreasyan, see A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 629. For Isahakyan, see Ashkhen Mikoyan, "Avetik Isaakyan i Anastas Mikoyan" [Avetik Ishakyan and Anastas Mikoyan], *Aravot*, June 2, 2014, <https://www.aravot.ru.am/2014/06/02/180030/> (accessed May 7, 2020). Baghramyan, see Sergo Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane* [My Father Anastas Mikoyan], trans. Eduard Avagyan and Svetlana Avagyan (Yerevan: Nairi,

fact that Stalin sent Mikoyan to Armenia as a late addition to a three-man group, and not alone, indicates that the *vozhd* did not trust him to execute such a mission without the “support” of others.<sup>55</sup> At least one Russian scholar has also suggested that Stalin used threats to ensure Mikoyan’s participation.<sup>56</sup> “These very circumstances,” noted Mikoyan’s son Sergo, “suggest that Stalin did not consider [my father] an ardent supporter of repressions.”<sup>57</sup> Mikoyan’s infamous speech on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the NKVD was similarly conditioned by such circumstances and was not based on his own initiative. Obedience to Stalin, Sergo wrote, was “absolutely obligatory” for his father’s personal and political survival.<sup>58</sup> In her memoirs, Old Baku Bolshevik and later political prisoner Olga Shatunovskaia noted that due to these circumstances, “it would be wrong to put Mikoyan on the same level as all these executioners [i.e., Stalin, Beria, Ezhov, Malenkov, or Litvin].”<sup>59</sup>

“Already after the suicide of Sergo [Ordzhonikidze], Stalin decided to taint me with participation in the repressions,” recalled Mikoyan years later. “He was very annoyed by

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2007), 50, and Medvedev, *Oni okruzhali Stalina*, 152-153. For the Bonner family, see Elena Bonner, *Mothers and Daughters*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 323-324. For Snegov, see Sergo Mikoyan, “Aleksii Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu’ [Aleksii Snegov in the Struggle for ‘De-Stalinization’],” *Voprosy istorii* 4 (Apr. 2006): 69-70, and Medvedev, *Oni okruzhali Stalina*, 153-155.

<sup>55</sup> Pavlov, *Anastas Mikoyan*, 92.

<sup>56</sup> Roy Medvedev wrote that once Mikoyan recounted the story of “how Stalin summoned him after Ordzhonikidze’s death and had said, threateningly: ‘That story of the shooting of the twenty-six Baku Commissars and how one of them, you, managed to stay alive – it’s all pretty vague and confused. And you’ve never wanted us to try to clear it up, have you, Anastas Ivanovich?’” See Medvedev, *Oni okruzhali Stalina*, 149, derived from the English translation *All Stalin’s Men*, trans. Harold Shukman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984), 38.

<sup>57</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, “Stalinism As I Saw It,” in *The Stalin Phenomenon*, ed. Alec Nove (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 185.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>59</sup> Olga Shatunovskaia, *Ob ushedshem veke* [About the Past Century], ed. Zhana Kutiyina, Andrei Broydo, and Anton Kutiyin (La Jolla, CA: DAA Books, 2001), 292. Of course, it is worth keeping in mind that Shatunovskaia did not know all of the circumstances of Mikoyan’s involvement in the Purges and her view of him was arguably clouded by their personal relationship and knowledge of Mikoyan’s de-Stalinization efforts during the Thaw. However, she nevertheless communicates the reality that Mikoyan, by his relatively small role in the Purges and his leading role in de-Stalinization, simply cannot be equalized with Stalin, Beria, Ezhov, Malenkov, or Litvin.



my negative attitude towards them, which I did not hide. I stood up for many of those arrested.”<sup>60</sup> Of Ter-Gabrielyan’s fall, Mikoyan recounted that Stalin had deduced that Mugdusi had “probably thrown [him] out because he knew too much.”<sup>61</sup> “And so,” Mikoyan wrote, “Stalin gave me an order, backed up by the decision of the Politburo, to go with his letter to Armenia, where ‘the pests and Trotskiists had dug in.’ ...I could not refuse the assignment of the Politburo.”<sup>62</sup> Sergo Mikoyan years later wrote that “unfortunately, my own father, Anastas Mikoyan, despite having plenty of common sense, inner honesty and decency, was fanatical enough to subdue these inborn qualities to the goals of *the Party*.”<sup>63</sup> As historian Sheila Fitzpatrick notes, the 1937 Armenian episode was the only known instance of Mikoyan being sent out to do Stalin’s bidding in the republics, and he “did a poor job, from Stalin’s point of view.”<sup>64</sup>

“In Yerevan, everything went according to Stalin’s plans,” recalled Mikoyan.<sup>65</sup> The plenum reconvened on September 22 and its focus was no longer only Akopov, but also Amatuni. Now an “enemy of the people,” he would be swallowed up by the very violence that he unleashed. In the evening, on behalf of the visiting Moscow commission, the Raikom Secretary of the Amasia raion, A. Galustyan, read the letter that Amatuni addressed to the “nationalist enemy of the people” Hovhannisyan, as well as Hovhannisyan’s testimony about Amatuni’s ideological vacillations. After Galustyan, several others came to the podium to launch blistering denunciations of Amatuni and Mugdusi. Earlier, one of them – T. Shakhmyan – attended the meeting with Malenkov

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<sup>60</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 628-629.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, “Stalinism As I Saw It,” 157.

<sup>64</sup> Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin’s Team*, 127.

<sup>65</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 629.

on September 19.<sup>66</sup> Finally, at the end of the evening, Mikoyan came to the podium to speak. The drama in the hall was amplified by the unexpected arrival of Beria from Tbilisi. Beria's sudden theatrical entry terrified Mikoyan, who feared that he had come to arrest him if he did not do Stalin's bidding. However, he managed to maintain his composure as he spoke. "Beria's appearance in the hall was a surprise to me," Mikoyan recalled. "He came in when I spoke from the rostrum. I do not rule out that the expression on my face changed at that moment. I arrived at the conclusion that Stalin ordered him to come to arrest me right there at the Plenum. However, I hope that I managed to hide my alarm and that he did not notice. Later, I realized that this was also part of the scenario: fearing my unpredictability, they wanted to drive me into a corner and show me that I have no choice but to submit completely."<sup>67</sup> Beria's arrival in Yerevan was also tied to the fate of his protégés, Amatuni and Mugdusi. As Georgia's First Secretary, he possessed near-total power in his native republic as well as informal power through his clients in Yerevan and Baku. Now, with the fatal miscalculations of Amatuni and Mugdusi in the wake of Ter-Gabrielyan's death, he was losing control in Armenia. Malenkov and Litvin had already arrested Mugdusi, and now Beria was witnessing the downfall of Amatuni. However, he took the loss of his Armenian deputies in stride and remained on-hand in Yerevan not only to ensure that Mikoyan followed Stalin's orders, but also to ensure that Amatuni would be followed by a politically palatable successor.

Casting aside his unease with Beria, Mikoyan read aloud a hastily composed handwritten speech from the rostrum.<sup>68</sup> In it, he accused Amatuni of concealing his

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<sup>66</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 10.

<sup>67</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 629-630.

<sup>68</sup> The full text of this speech does not exist. There are only handwritten notes (see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, ll. 1-17). The notes indicate that the speech was hastily assembled at the last minute by Mikoyan,

ideological dalliances with Specificism, citing the July 1927 letter to Hovhannisyan. The speech was met with “thunderous applause” and a “standing ovation” from the audience.<sup>69</sup> Amatuni, who was present at the proceedings, was incensed and attempted to “put up stout resistance.”<sup>70</sup> According to an eyewitness account of the event, the Armenian First Secretary rejected all charges. “You lie,” he told Mikoyan.<sup>71</sup> In response, Mikoyan pulled the incriminating 1927 letter from his pocket.<sup>72</sup> The beleaguered Amatuni then reached into his own coat pocket. Guards immediately surrounded him, and Mikoyan told him to “hand it over.” Amatuni produced a revolver from his coat and gave it to Mikoyan.<sup>73</sup> The chamber erupted in chaos. Amid the disorder, Armenian Bolshevik Vardges Vardapetyan “hurled a few upbraiding words at Mikoyan.”<sup>74</sup>

Mikoyan fulfilled Stalin’s task – he successfully assured the final downfall of Beria’s Armenian deputy Amatuni. At the same time, he did not accomplish this act without his own share of involvement in the Purges in Armenia, however unwilling he may

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which was not uncommon for him. His ability to improvise speeches was a skill that he first developed during his revolutionary youth. Notably, during Mikoyan’s meeting in Baku with Azerbaijani Old Bolsheviks in March 1964, one of them, Mamed Veisov, recalled attending an underground Bolshevik meeting in 1919 in which Mikoyan spoke but did not have a written speech and only used notes. “You spoke without a sheet,” he said to Mikoyan, “but you often took out individual quotes written on cigarette paper from your left and then your right pockets.” To this story, Mikoyan jokingly responded, “we didn’t have portfolios,” prompting laughter and applause from those present. Veisov then added that Mikoyan used a similar approach when he delivered his four-hour-long speech at a Party Plenum in Baku during his 1964 visit. “I saw that you took out quotes from your right, then from your left, pocket and read them. We enjoyed the fact that you have preserved the customs of the beautiful old period of the Leninist underground to this day.” (see GARF, f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 26). Mikoyan reiterated this point in his memoirs: “Speeches were not read from a piece of paper, but delivered on the fly, often improvised.” (A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 27).

<sup>69</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 10.

<sup>70</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 226.

<sup>71</sup> Haroot, “The Purges in Soviet Armenia,” 138.

<sup>72</sup> The copy of Amatuni’s letter in Mikoyan’s file in GARF (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 22.) has a large crease in the middle and may have been the one used by Mikoyan on the evening of 22 September 1937.

<sup>73</sup> Haroot, “The Purges in Soviet Armenia,” 138.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Vardapetyan’s biography remains obscure. He could in fact be Amatuni, with the mistaken identity issue originating from a mistranslation of the author’s original Armenian text, stemming from confusion over Amatuni’s original surname – Vardapetyan.

have been to participate. In his memoirs, Mikoyan recounted receiving a list prepared by Armenia's local NKVD of 300 names of people to be repressed which he was then forced to sign.<sup>75</sup> Looking through the surnames, he noticed one of an old friend and distant relative – Danush Shaverdyan. “He was my senior comrade and my mentor for work in the Party during the years of my youth,” Mikoyan fondly recalled. It was Shevardyan who first introduced Mikoyan to the writings of Lenin. He immediately struck his surname off the list, but it was to no avail. Shaverdyan would be executed by the Armenian NKVD in 1941. “Obviously, Beria informed the local NKVD that my signature was needed as a mere formality, and that my considerations could be dismissed, even though I was a member of the Politburo and I arrived there with a letter from Stalin,” wrote Mikoyan.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, even this list of 300 was apparently not enough for the Armenian NKVD in an era when local authorities sought to demonstrate their loyalty to Moscow by exceeding quotas for “smashing enemies.”<sup>77</sup> According to Ezhov's infamous Order 00447, Armenia's quota (*limit*) for executions of Category 1 “anti-Soviet elements” was originally set at 500.<sup>78</sup> However, with local reports of “sabotage” and “wrecking” across Armenia,

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<sup>75</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 630.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 38 and 630. It must be noted that Mikoyan recalled the list as 300 names “for arrest.” However, Shaverdyan, his wife Elizaveta, and his brothers Aleksandr and Aram had already been arrested by the time of Mikoyan's visit. Therefore, the intent of the list was likely for another form of repression. Notably, on April 20, 1954, one month after Mikoyan's March 1954 speech in Yerevan, Shaverdyan's son Sergei, wrote to Mikoyan, appealing to him to have the cases of his parents reviewed. He was a 9-year-old at the time of their arrest in 1937. In response, Mikoyan forwarded his request to Procurator General Roman Rudenko that same day. “Please review and inform me about the results,” Mikoyan wrote to Rudenko (see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1101, l. 103). According to Vladimir Mikoyan, his grandfather also played a key role in ensuring Sergei's entry into the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) and eventually into the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Sergei Shaverdyan subsequently went on to enjoy a successful career as a Soviet diplomat (Vladimir Mikoyan, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Moscow, March 11, 2020).

<sup>77</sup> J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, eds. *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Yale: Yale University Press, 2002), 471.

<sup>78</sup> Order 00447 cast a wide net over an array of vaguely defined “anti-Soviet elements” throughout the USSR. These “elements” were broadly divided into two categories by the NKVD. Category 1 consisted of the “most active” anti-Soviet elements, subject to “immediate arrest and, after consideration of their case by the [NKVD] troikas, to be shot.” Category 2 consisted of “all the remaining less active but nonetheless hostile elements.” These were to be arrested and confined in concentration camps “for a term ranging from 8 to 10

Malenkov, Litvin, and the Armenian NKVD apparently felt this original quota to be too low and sought to increase it by an additional 700 names, a request that Mikoyan now had to approve. Consequently, in a telegram sent to Ezhov on September 22, Mikoyan, Malenkov and Litvin requested an additional number of 700 Category 1 repressions for a “real purge of Armenia” amidst “the revelation of a growing body of evidence regarding the free revelry of Dashnaks and other anti-Soviet elements” in the republic. The original quota of 500, the authors noted, was “already exhausted.”<sup>79</sup> Ezhov was more than happy to oblige and even topped the original request. “I propose shooting an additional 1,500 people,” he callously wrote to Stalin, who promptly approved the requested increase with a characteristic “za” (“for”).<sup>80</sup> Mikoyan, who was always disinclined toward violent solutions to problems, evidently never forgave himself for his role in this episode. He reportedly carried the guilt with him for the rest of his life, becoming the one member of Stalin’s circle “most distraught by his conscience.”<sup>81</sup> The sense of guilt was heightened by the fact that his native Armenia was involved, just over 20 years after the Armenian Genocide of 1915.<sup>82</sup> The Armenian connection later played an important role in Mikoyan’s efforts to test the waters of de-Stalinization, beginning with his 1954 Yerevan speech.

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years, while the most vicious and socially dangerous among them are subject to confinement for similar terms in prisons as determined by the troikas.” In Transcaucasia, the numbers for Category 1 as established with Order 00447 on July 30, 1937 were 2,000 for the Georgian SSR, 1,500 for the Azerbaijan SSR, and 500 for the Armenian SSR. The numbers for Category 2 were 3,750 for the Azerbaijan SSR, 3,000 for the Georgian SSR, and 1,000 for the Armenian SSR. For the full text of Order 00447, see Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, 473–480. For the quotas for the three Transcaucasian republics, see Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, 475.

<sup>79</sup> Denisova, *Tragediia Sovetskoi Derevni, Tom 5. 1937–1939, Kniga 1. 1937*, 367. The original document is held at APRF f. 3, op. 58, d. 212, l. 113.

<sup>80</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 166, d. 580, l. 10, and RGASPI f. 17, op. 162, d. 22, l. 12. See also Khaustov, Naumov, and Plotnikova, *Lubianka*, 376. The original document is held at APRF f. 3, op. 58, d. 212, l. 112.

<sup>81</sup> Cohen, *The Victims Return*, 91.

<sup>82</sup> Evidence suggests that the 1915 Genocide was on Mikoyan’s mind as he was writing his March 1954 Yerevan address. Specifically, he referred to it in the draft text that he prepared for the speech on Armenian national issues (see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 327). His discussion of the Genocide in this text will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

The repressions were followed by the appointment of a new Armenian First Secretary. Amatuni's downfall had left the post of First Secretary vacant, and Mikoyan and Malenkov sought to bring in an Armenian leader from outside the republic. The void would be filled by Grigorii Artemevich Arutinov, who would serve as Armenia's Party boss for over a decade. An Armenian from Georgia who only spoke Russian and had to learn Armenian, Arutinov served as the Second Secretary of the Tbilisi City Committee. He was proposed by Beria, who sought to retain his influence in Armenia. However, others have speculated that his expectations for the new Armenian leader were also laced with wicked cynicism, motivated by a desire to rid Georgia of a potential political rival. "Let the Armenians eat him alive," Beria purportedly remarked.<sup>83</sup> For his part, Arutinov was hardly a Beria loyalist. His relations with the Georgian leader were already complicated by Beria's role in the death of his brother-in-law, Artem Geurkov, who served as First Secretary of the Adjarian ASSR on the Georgian Black Sea coast. The latter would commit suicide under the threat of arrest by the NKVD on October 30, 1937.<sup>84</sup> His young daughter, Nami, came to live with Arutinov and his family in Yerevan in 1939.<sup>85</sup>

With a new First Secretary selected to replace Amatuni, Mikoyan telephoned Stalin from Yerevan. "The plenum of the Central Committee expelled Amatuni and Akopov from the Party and transferred their cases to the NKVD," Mikoyan said. "Malenkov, Beria, and I are proposing Grigorii Arutinov, the Second Secretary of the Tbilisi City Committee as

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<sup>83</sup> Nami Mikoyan, *Svoimi glazami s liubov'iu i pechal'iu...* [Through My Own Eyes with Love and Sorrow]. (Moscow: SNC Publishing, 2018), 62.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. Notably, in 1926, Geurkov began studying in Moscow at the Scientific Automotive Institute (NAMI). When Nami was born, her parents originally considered giving her the more traditional Armenian name "Gayane" after her grandmother in Telavi. However, in a burst of revolutionary enthusiasm befitting the NEP era, her parents decided to name her Nami, after the Scientific Automotive Institute instead. "My father lived in the future," she recalled in her memoirs (see N. A. Mikoyan, *Svoimi glazami s liubov'iu i pechal'iu...*, 17-18).

the First Secretary. For the Second Secretary of the Central Committee, we propose Margaryan, a member of the Central Committee of Georgia, the editor of an Armenian newspaper, who previously worked in Armenia. For the Third Secretary, we propose Comrade Galustyan... Inform us of your opinion.”<sup>86</sup> In response, Stalin issued a joint letter with Molotov on September 23. It stated that Central Committee “does not object to the appointment of Arutinov as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia, Margaryan as Second, and Galustyan as Third, if the plenum of the Armenian Central Committee does not have any doubts about these candidates. If the plenum should have doubts, then it should be given the opportunity to discuss the issue in detail and resolve it independently.”<sup>87</sup>

On September 23, the plenum adopted a letter to Stalin “to the cries of ‘ura’ and stormy applause.”<sup>88</sup> The letter slavishly praised “the brilliant leader of the nations” and “the father and liberator of the Armenian people” for his “historical letter on the situation in Armenia” and for “unmasking” the “entire knot of the rot in the leadership of the Armenian Central Committee and the Soviet Armenian government with ingenious insight.”<sup>89</sup> The Armenian Party also owned up to its lack of vigilance. “The Bolsheviks of Armenia,” the letter stated, “were unable to discern in time how the enemies of the people sitting in our state and Party leadership – Amatuni, Guloyan, Akopov, Mugdusi and Anesoglyan and others, cloaked themselves with speeches about fidelity to the Party and the fight against enemies.” It asserted that “in reality, they carried out heinous acts of wrecking and allowed the enemies of the people – Dashnaks, Trotskiists, and a whole spy-

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<sup>86</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 58.

<sup>87</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, l. 59.

<sup>88</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 10.

<sup>89</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, ll. 12-15. For an earlier draft, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 607, ll. 54-57.

wrecking cabal – to walk freely throughout Armenia.” The Armenian Party then blamed itself for its “criminal lack of concern” toward the threat of “Khanjyanism” in the aftermath of Khanjyan’s “provocative suicide.” Its inability to “root out” this “threat” resulted in “vile work” perpetuated by these “enemies” using “heinous fascist methods to cover up their odious counter-revolutionary deeds.”<sup>90</sup>

The letter pointed to the works of “wrecking” and “sabotage” throughout the republic that Armenian leaders raised in their September 19 meeting with Malenkov. It blamed these “wreckers” for Armenia’s poor agriculture performance and stagnant industrial development. The plenum asserted that, although the Armenian Party had “opened the main hornet’s nest and smashed it” through Stalin’s “greatest insights” and “finest leadership instincts,” enemies nevertheless “still existed.” Ominously, the letter declared that every “enemy” down “to the last villain” would be “erased from the land of the Armenian SSR.” The authors vowed to “destroy and clean spy-wrecking Dashnak-Trotskiite rubbish from our beautiful land” and to “decisively take up the liquidation of the consequences of sabotage and subversive work” against the Armenian Party by “rotten and deceitful people” who would be “quickly removed from the path forward.”<sup>91</sup> The Armenian Party leaders promised “to learn all the lessons” from the episode and “to cultivate in every Bolshevik, worker, and collective farmer” a sense of “revolutionary offensive vigilance” against “enemies of the people.” Young cadres in the Party would be promoted to “give all their energy to the cause of socialism, to deploy genuine Bolshevik work and to elevate the Armenian SSR to the ranks of the advanced republics of the great

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<sup>90</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 13.

<sup>91</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 14.



Soviet Union in the nearest future.” The letter concluded with the customary praise of “our father, the great leader (*vozhd*) of nations,” Comrade Stalin.<sup>92</sup>

On the evening of 23 September, in a closed session of the Armenian Party plenum, the attendees formally removed the “exposed counter-revolutionary enemies of the people” Amatuni and Akopov from their posts and from the Armenian Central Committee. Dismissed from the membership of the Party, their cases were to be referred to the NKVD.<sup>93</sup> Still other prominent names – Mugdusi, Guloyan, Gevorkov, and Kostikyan – were expelled from the Central Committee. All would be eventually executed in 1938.<sup>94</sup> In the same session, Mikoyan moved to have the new leadership choices approved by the attendees – Arutinov as First Secretary, Margaryan as Second, and Galustyan as Third. Mikoyan likewise proactively promoted candidates for the Bureau of the Armenian Central Committee, and M. N. Danelyan to head the Armenian Sovnarkom and M. P. Papyan to head the Central Executive Committee.<sup>95</sup>

The new appointments signaled the beginning of a “stabilization” in Armenia after the height of the Ezhovschina under Amatuni. However, it was not to be Mikoyan’s final intervention in Armenian affairs. In the aftermath of the September 1937 events, he decided to retain a supervisory role in Armenia. In December 1937, he assumed the post of a Supreme Soviet Deputy for Nationalities representing Yerevan.<sup>96</sup> In this capacity, he used his position as a “shield” to protect Armenia from another episode like that of

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<sup>92</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 15.

<sup>93</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Filippov, “9 podvigov tovarishcha Malenkova.”

<sup>95</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 24, l. 11.

<sup>96</sup> For all materials dealing with Mikoyan’s first trip to Yerevan in relation to Supreme Soviet elections in December 1937 and his work assisting Armenia in the late 1930s in general, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, dela 605-606, and 610-611. For drafts of Mikoyan’s December 9 speech in Yerevan related to the 1937 Supreme Soviet election, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, dela 608-609.

September 1937 and to assist Arutinov in his relations with Moscow.<sup>97</sup> He initially supervised developments closely in the republic but became less directly involved during the war. He also developed a good working relationship with Arutinov, a partnership solidified by the marriage of Nami to Mikoyan's son Aleksei in 1950.<sup>98</sup> For his part, Arutinov supervised significant infrastructure projects, including the construction of Yerevan's main landmark buildings and the development of the spa town of Jermuk.<sup>99</sup> He also attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to convince Moscow to transfer Nagorno-Karabakh to Soviet Armenia.<sup>100</sup> Mikoyan was to hold his post as a Supreme Soviet Deputy for Yerevan long after Arutinov's eventual departure, all the way through to the Brezhnev era, stepping down only in 1974 under pressure from Brezhnev.<sup>101</sup> It was from this position that he delivered his March 1954 speech in Yerevan.

### **Setting the Stage after Stalin**

In his 1954 speech, Mikoyan articulated the essence of a post-Stalin Soviet nationality policy that balanced an expanded space for national expression with controls to prevent manifestations of national chauvinism. In this sense, it would be a return to earlier variations of the Soviet nationality policy, with Mikoyan moving the needle back from Stalinist repression. However, the speech did not represent the first effort to revamp the Soviet nationality policy in the early months immediately following Stalin's death. Beria

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<sup>97</sup> It is unclear if "shielding" Armenia was Mikoyan's intended goal from the outset.

<sup>98</sup> N. A. Mikoyan, *Svoimi glazami s liubov'iu i pechal'iu...*, 132.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-121.

<sup>101</sup> According to Sergo Mikoyan, Brezhnev pressured Armenian First Secretary Anton Kochinyan to relieve Mikoyan from his Supreme Soviet Deputy post in 1974. See S. A. Mikoyan, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu [Anastas Mikoyan – A Life Devoted to the People]" (unpublished manuscript, Autumn 2009), typescript, 451.

attempted to use the nationality issue to bolster his position amid the ensuing power struggle within the Soviet leadership. He already began to cast himself as the champion for nationalities as early as the XIX Party Congress in October 1952.<sup>102</sup> Behind the scenes, beginning in April 1953, both he and Khrushchev experimented with a more flexible nationality policy in what became informally known as “Beria’s New Course.”<sup>103</sup> This series of reform policies had an immediate impact on Beria’s power base in Georgia, but primarily affected the western parts of the Soviet Union, specifically the Baltics, Belarus, and western Ukraine.<sup>104</sup> Together, Beria and Khrushchev sought to use the “New Course” policies to secure the support of the union republics and non-Russian nationalities in the post-Stalin power struggle.<sup>105</sup> However, neither of them sought to publicly articulate or define a new overarching framework toward the nationality question, as Mikoyan would in March 1954. Additionally, as will be seen in Chapter 5, Mikoyan carried the nationality framework from his Yerevan speech into other Thaw-era nationality reforms, most notably the 1961 CPSU Party Program and the NPNSC Subcommittee of the 1960s Soviet Constitutional Commission.

By the end of 1953, the downfall of Beria also created new circumstances in the more specific context of Soviet Armenia in advance of Mikoyan’s speech. The first was the downfall of Arutinov and the second was the large volume of letters that Mikoyan received from various individuals who sought the rehabilitation of their purged family members. After the downfall of Beria, the ascendant Khrushchev sought a clean sweep of

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<sup>102</sup> Michael Loader, “Beria and Khrushchev: The Power Struggle over Nationality Policy and the Case of Latvia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68, no. 10 (December 2016): 1761.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 1760.

<sup>104</sup> William Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 20.

<sup>105</sup> For the best overview, see Loader, “Beria and Khrushchev,” 1759-1792.

the leaderships in all three of the Caucasus republics to rout out any lingering influence of Beria.<sup>106</sup> This sweep included not only Beria loyalists Bagirov and Mirtskhulava, but also Arutinov who had a more ambiguous, and at times antagonistic, relationship with Beria.<sup>107</sup> According to Mikoyan's son Sergo, his father initially opposed Arutinov's removal, but eventually came to accept it.<sup>108</sup> However, such developments were not easily acceptable for Nami who sought to go to Yerevan to see her uncle. Mikoyan strongly discouraged her from traveling to see him, noting that Arutinov had fallen out of favor with the Kremlin. According to Nami, their discussion lasted four hours, but she remained loyal to Arutinov. Mikoyan was ultimately unable to persuade her to change her mind and she went to Armenia.<sup>109</sup> In Yerevan, Arutinov faced numerous denunciations from members of Armenia's Communist Party. He eventually fell from power, but avoided the violent fates of Beria and Bagirov, and instead served as the director of a collective farm near Yerevan.<sup>110</sup> Suren Tovmasyan emerged as his replacement as First Secretary.<sup>111</sup> Arutinov,

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<sup>106</sup> Sergei Khrushchev, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Cranston, RI, May 3, 2019.

<sup>107</sup> Various theories exist regarding the reasons for the downfall of Arutinov. The traditional explanation, advanced by historian Mary Kilbourne Matossian in *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia*, asserts that Arutinov's downfall was caused by his ties with Beria. The Matossian argument has been repeated by other historians of the Caucasus, including such eminent names as Ronald Grigor Suny, Charles King, and George Bournoutian. However, Matossian's argument, based entirely on the official condemnations of Arutinov in 1953, obscures the reality of the uneasy and often antagonistic relations between the two men. Unlike the first Secretaries of Georgia and Azerbaijan, Arutinov was far from a Beria loyalist. In her sympathetic portrait of Arutinov in *Svoimi glazami s liubov'iu i pechal'iu...* (92-93), Nami Mikoyan claims that a personal feud between Khrushchev and Arutinov was the reason for his downfall. This explanation has been dismissed by Sergei Khrushchev, who contended that his father simply wanted to make a clean sweep of the leaderships in all three Caucasus republics (Khrushchev, interview, May 3, 2019). Finally, in his memoirs *Anavart husher*, Anton Kochinyan argued that Arutinov's downfall was not caused by Khrushchev, but by Arutinov's political enemies within Armenia who saw Beria's downfall as an opportune time to convince the new post-Stalin leadership to get rid of Arutinov. This view was echoed by Sergo Mikoyan in his memoir about his father, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu" (published only in a partial Armenian translation as *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane* in 2007).

<sup>108</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 50.

<sup>109</sup> N. A. Mikoyan, *Svoimi glazami s liubov'iu i pechal'iu...*, 164.

<sup>110</sup> Krista A. Goff, *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 98.

<sup>111</sup> Mary K. Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 199.

who suffered from diabetes, later died in Tbilisi on November 9, 1957. Mikoyan sent a letter expressing “deep condolences” to his widow Nina the following day.<sup>112</sup>

Shortly after Beria’s arrest, Mikoyan began to receive several direct requests for rehabilitation from relatives of individuals who were killed in the Purges. The majority of these requests came from individuals of various ethnic backgrounds (Armenian, Russian, Georgian, Jewish) who maintained ties with Mikoyan dating back to his revolutionary years in the Caucasus.<sup>113</sup> “After Stalin’s death,” Mikoyan recalled, “requests began to come to me from family members of repressed persons, requesting review of their cases. Many contacted me through Lev Stepanovich Shahumyan.”<sup>114</sup> The sheer volume of letters had a profound impact on Mikoyan and prompted him to act. Scholar Samuel Casper has argued that Mikoyan was influenced in this regard by a sense of obligation to his Caucasian (specifically Bakuvian) revolutionary patronage network.<sup>115</sup>

However, the Bakuvian revolutionary connection was arguably just one aspect that informed Mikoyan’s actions. As his 1954 speech demonstrates, the factor of his Armenian background was at least as important. For example, the poet Yeghishe Charents, who became the symbol of both Mikoyan’s de-Stalinization efforts and the Thaw in Armenia, had virtually no personal connection with Mikoyan or his network of Baku revolutionaries. The only connection shared between Mikoyan and Charents was their common Armenian identity. Similarly, Mikoyan’s decision to invoke the names of the writers Raffi and Patkanyan in his speech reflected on his own love for the works of these writers in his

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<sup>112</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1268, l. 33.

<sup>113</sup> Casper, “The Bolshevik Afterlife,” 44. For the letters sent to Mikoyan, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1099, 1100, and 1101.

<sup>114</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 636.

<sup>115</sup> Casper, “The Bolshevik Afterlife,” 44. The other network, not discussed by Casper, was Mikoyan’s Armenia network, which will be the focus of Chapter 3.

youth, in the specifically Armenian contexts of Sanahin and the Armenian seminary.<sup>116</sup> Finally and most significantly, in addition to his Bakuvian patronage network, Mikoyan also had a separate Armenian patronage network that included some of the republic's highest officials.<sup>117</sup> These two networks, rooted in Mikoyan's Caucasian background, often overlapped with one another as factors influencing his work on de-Stalinization. Therefore, Mikoyan's decision to invoke Charents in his speech was intended to send a message both to a specifically Armenian audience as well as to those in his Bakuvian network who would have also been familiar with Charents in the Soviet cultural context of the time.

Another factor influencing Mikoyan was ideology. As Mikoyan himself said throughout his life, he, very much like Khrushchev, strongly believed in the promise of the original ideals of the revolution. By extension, he viewed Stalin as a deviation from "Lenin's true path."<sup>118</sup> Additionally, Mikoyan's personal guilt from his own participation in Stalinist state violence has been cited by historians and memoirists as a motivation for his proactive stance on de-Stalinization.<sup>119</sup> There were other personal factors as well. Alla Kuznetsova, the young wife of Mikoyan's son, Sergo, was the daughter of Aleksei Kuznetsov who was killed by Stalin in the Leningrad Affair.<sup>120</sup> The involvement of former political prisoner and Old Bolshevik Olga Shatunovskaia in the de-Stalinization process at

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<sup>116</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 34. For good biographical sketches of Patkanyan and Raffi, see Agop J. Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, and Nourhan Ouzounian, eds. *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III: From The Eighteenth Century To Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 316-318 and 345-348.

<sup>117</sup> For a more discussion on Mikoyan's Armenian network, see Chapter 3.

<sup>118</sup> Polly Jones, "From the Secret Speech to the burial of Stalin: Real and ideal responses to de-Stalinization," in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era*, ed. Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 42. See also Moshe Lewin, *Stalinism and the Seeds of Soviet Reform: The Debates of the 1960s* (London: Pluto Press, 1991).

<sup>119</sup> Cohen, *The Victims Return*, 91.

<sup>120</sup> Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team*, 207. See also Stepan Mikoyan, *Stepan Anastasovich Mikoyan: Memoirs of Military Test-Flying and Life with the Kremlin's Elite*, trans. Aschen Mikoyan (Shrewsbury: AirLife Publishing, 1999), 141.

Mikoyan's behest is also worth noting, due to her earlier work with him in the Baku revolutionary movement.<sup>121</sup>

In this context, Mikoyan decided that he had to make a public gesture to signify that a new period of change had arrived, and to communicate to others that he would be willing to act on their behalf to redress the crimes of Stalinism.<sup>122</sup> A natural place for Mikoyan to begin was the rehabilitation of the fiery poet Charents, arrested by the NKVD in 1936 and shot in 1937 on fabricated charges of conspiracy with Armenian nationalists. Charents was the embodiment of the revolutionary zeitgeist that characterized the era of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) in the Armenian context. A bohemian and a committed communist, Charents fervently believed in the promise of the Bolshevik Revolution and tied it to with the fate of the Armenian people in his writings and verse.<sup>123</sup>

Discussions of Charents's rehabilitation preceded Mikoyan's speech. The prehistory of the effort dates to the Mikoyan-Malenkov-Litvin intervention of September 1937. Although the Soviet press did not publicize the intervention, many in Armenia were aware of it and they sent hundreds of appeals to Mikoyan and Malenkov to investigate and redress the abuses of the former leadership. The Soviet Armenian government dealt with the matter by establishing an investigative commission for appeals directed to Mikoyan and Malenkov. From September 26 to October 1, it would hear and resolve 306 individual

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<sup>121</sup> A Party activist from Mikoyan's revolutionary years, Shatunovskaia not only worked alongside Mikoyan in Baku but also claimed to have shared a romantic relationship with him, about which she loved to recount years later. For details, see Shatunovskaia, *Ob ushedshem veke*, 90-101, and see also Smith, *Moscow 1956*, 97.

<sup>122</sup> Evidence suggests that Mikoyan understood the significance of invoking Charents's name in the speech for victims of Stalinism, specifically the fact that in his discussions with the Armenian government, he anticipated an increase in letters requesting rehabilitations in the aftermath of the 1954 speech (HAA f. 1, op. 34, d. 54, l. 26 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1099, l. 1).

<sup>123</sup> For a good biographical sketch of Charents, see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 958-963.

cases.<sup>124</sup> In many ways, the commission served as a crude predecessor to the much more thorough review commission that Mikoyan would oversee with the Soviet Armenian leadership after the deaths of Stalin and Beria. However, unlike the 1954 review commission in which Mikoyan worked closely with Yerevan, neither Mikoyan nor Malenkov took a direct role in the work of the 1937 commission, even though it was in their name. Additionally, the era and its circumstances limited the scope of the commission's work, and the most egregious cases from the Amatuni-Mugdusi period would remain uninvestigated until the Thaw. Of these cases, one of the most prominent was that of Charents. On September 25, his wife, Izabella, appealed personally to Mikoyan to intervene to save her husband, underscoring his innocence, illness, and morphine addiction.<sup>125</sup> However, her letter never reached Mikoyan. Izabella was arrested by the Armenian NKVD shortly after sending it and she was subsequently exiled by the government to Siberia.<sup>126</sup>

The death of Stalin in 1953 created new conditions for a full investigation and eventual rehabilitation of the poet as well as redress for the wrongful exile of his wife. The official process of rehabilitating Charents commenced on December 10, 1953, after the arrest of Beria and about two weeks before his execution on December 23.<sup>127</sup> The waters would be tested by the Armenian writer Hrachya Kochar, possibly with the encouragement of Mikoyan.<sup>128</sup> Earlier, Kochar infamously denounced Charents and his works to the

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<sup>124</sup> For the complete findings of the commission, see HAA f. 1, op. 17, d. 98.

<sup>125</sup> For Izabella Charents's letter in Armenian and Russian, see Yeghishe Charents, *Norahayt ejer* [Newly Discovered Writings], ed. Davit Gasparian (Yerevan: Yerevani hamalsarani hratarakch'ut'yun, 1996), 620-621.

<sup>126</sup> A. Charents, "Yeghishe Charents's Final Years," 75.

<sup>127</sup> HAA f. 1191, op. 1, d. 962, l. 164.

<sup>128</sup> Kochar's address at the XVII Armenian Party Congress and Mikoyan's 1954 speech in Yerevan both touch on similar themes with regard to Raffi and Charents. For instance, both men underscore Chernyshevskii's influence on Raffi, and while Kochar calls for Charents to be included in the "canon of



Armenian Writers' Union in April 1937. "Charents is a stone that has fallen on the path of Armenian poetry," he declared. "That stone must be removed as soon as possible."<sup>129</sup> Seven months later, on November 27, 1937, the poet was executed by the Soviet government.<sup>130</sup> Remarkably, 17 years later, at the XVII Congress of the Armenian Communist Party on February 16, 1954, Kochar walked back his charges and instead called for the exoneration of Charents. Behind the scenes, the writer chaired the rehabilitation commission tasked with reviewing the case of the poet.<sup>131</sup>

Kochar also called for the republication of the works of the Armenian writer Raffi at the XVII Armenian Party Congress.<sup>132</sup> Born near Salmast in northwestern Iran as Hakob Melik Hakobyan, Raffi was among the foremost figures in 19th century Russian Armenian national literature, alongside other figures such as Khachatur Abovyan.<sup>133</sup> However, during the Stalin era, Soviet authorities denounced Raffi for his "bourgeois nationalism" and for allegedly downplaying the role of the Russian people in helping the Armenian national movement.<sup>134</sup> "The question of Raffi is not a question about a single writer,"

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Soviet culture" and Mikoyan calls for Charents's works to become the "property of the Soviet reader." Such similarities suggest that Mikoyan and Kochar had discussed these writers behind the scenes. The major difference in their speeches is that Kochar's wording is more cautious, underscoring the "ideological errors" of these writers, whereas Mikoyan is much more forthright, unrestrained, and even emotional in his praise for both of them, especially in the second, third, and fourth drafts of the speech. It should also be noted that, in contrast to Mikoyan, Kochar's attitude toward de-Stalinization was ambivalent, and in March 1956, he was one of the very few public intellectuals in Armenia who criticized Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the XX Party Congress (see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 47).

<sup>129</sup> A. Charents, "Yeghishe Charents's Final Years," 96.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>131</sup> HAA f. 1191, op. 1, d. 962, l. 186.

<sup>132</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 34, d. 2, ll. 75-76.

<sup>133</sup> Historian Razmik Panossian describes Raffi and Abovyan as the "two towering giants of eastern Armenian literature" in the 19th century. Abovyan, who was the first Armenian author to write in vernacular eastern Armenian, accompanied Baltic German explorer Friedrich Parrot on the first recorded expedition of Mount Ararat in 1829. For Panossian's discussion on the significance of both authors, see Panossian, *The Armenians*, 142-145. For Parrot's account of his Ararat ascent with Abovyan, see Friedrich Parrot, *Journey to Ararat*, trans. William Desborough Cooley, ed. Pietro A. Shakarian (London: Gomidas Institute, 2016).

<sup>134</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie A. Kivelson, *Russia's Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 322, and Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies*, 168.

Kochar told the delegates. “It is a question about the assessment of the history of our people, the assessment of the values created by our people. Raffi expressed the national liberation aspirations of our people. His struggle was directed against the Sultan’s regime, against the most severe regime of that time.”<sup>135</sup> After praising Raffi as a “brilliant master of the artistic word” who fought for the Armenian people “with the pen of a great writer,” he noted that “in an effort to blacken Raffi, people hid the influence of Russian literature on Raffi, the influence of Chernyshevskii on him. Raffi was a man of Russian orientation and an ardent defender of this orientation.”<sup>136</sup>

Nevertheless, Kochar was not unequivocal in his praise of Raffi, and tempered his acclamation with criticism. “Raffi has reactionary elements in his work,” he noted. “His hatred in some places turns into aggressive nationalism.” However, he stressed that these “nationalist elements did not constitute the whole creative spirit of Raffi” and that “the spirit of his creativity is the aspiration for liberation, the hope of our people.” He concluded that it would be “wrong to deny Raffi, and mistakenly unquestioningly accept it completely.” He reminded his audience that Stepan Shahumyan, the famous Armenian Bolshevik revolutionary and friend of Mikoyan, counted Raffi and the playwright Aleksandr Shirvanzade among his favorite Armenian authors.<sup>137</sup>

Kochar was not only calling for Raffi to be restored to Armenian readership, but also was using him as an opening for discussing the reevaluation of the much more serious case of Charents. The exoneration of such a prominent former “enemy of the people” was not a light matter and the fact that the subject was broached by one of his original

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<sup>135</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 34, d. 2, l. 75.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. On Shirvanzade, see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 480-483.

denouncers made it even more significant. By highlighting the shortcomings of Raffi and subsequently other Armenian writers and public figures, such as Levon Shant, it became easier for Kochar to walk back his own denunciation of Charents and to open a discussion on his case. Charents's case was not only a cultural question, but also a fundamentally political one. Kochar told the delegates:

We note the historical limitations of these writers and criticize the flaws in their work without abandoning their heritage. There have also been contradictory writers in our time, and one such writer was Yeghishe Charents. Our people are not indifferent to Charents's literary heritage, no matter how isolated they are. This legacy, of course, has its bright and dark sides. It is impossible to erase from Soviet literature Charents's poem about Lenin, his talented lyrical works exposing the Dashnaks, his fiery verses, his realistic poem 'Commander Shavarsh.' At the same time, vicious works with unacceptable content, such as 'Along the Crossroads of History,' should not be included in the literature. Politically unseasonable works by Charents are not artistically accepted by the people either. But the people remember and love the best works of Charents. His oscillations were an expression of Beria's anti-Leninist policy in Transcaucasia. Certainly, Charents's ideological errors cannot be justified, but it is necessary to clarify them. His sound works cannot remain locked up. They belong to the canon of our Soviet culture.<sup>138</sup>

Significantly, Kochar's last line was greeted by thunderous applause from the delegates, implying widespread sympathy among them for Charents. Kochar's statements successfully tested the waters for what was possible and set the stage for what was to transpire in Yerevan on March 11.

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<sup>138</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 34, d. 2, ll. 75-76. Charents's "Along the Crossroads of History" (to which Kochar referred) expressed the poet's "bitterness and disappointment over Armenia's leadership, particularly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and ends with the sarcastic observation that in order to be saved, Armenia should perhaps attempt, like the camel in the parable, to pass through the eye of a needle (Matt. 19:24)." (see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 962.)

## Mikoyan's Yerevan Speech, March 1954

Although Mikoyan used his position as a Supreme Soviet deputy to assist and protect Armenia, he became less directly involved in Armenian affairs during the war years.<sup>139</sup> However, this arrangement began to change in the Soviet legislative elections of 1954. On March 10 of that year, he traveled to Yerevan to meet with his voters and, ironically, commenced the electoral trip with a visit to Sergei Merkurov's monument to Stalin in Yerevan's Victory Park.<sup>140</sup> The speech that he was to deliver on that trip would contribute to the process that would eventually result in the removal of the very Stalin statue that he visited on that day.

Mikoyan delivered his address at Yerevan's Speniardov Opera Theatre on the evening of March 11, under a large portrait of Stalin.<sup>141</sup> In contrast to the convivial countenance seen in his subsequent visits to Armenia, Mikoyan appeared pensive and anxious, uncertain about the potential reaction from his Armenian audience.<sup>142</sup> Donning his reading glasses, he delivered his address, primarily in Russian and partially in Armenian. In fact, he not only commenced and concluded the speech in Armenian, but also

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<sup>139</sup> Four dela in GARF on Mikoyan's 1937 Supreme Soviet electoral trip also document his Armenian activities of the late 1930s (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, dela 605-606, and 610-611). There are also materials on Mikoyan's involvement held at the Armenian National Archives in Yerevan. Documentation on Mikoyan's work in the republic in the 1940s is noticeably less by comparison.

<sup>140</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 1. The monument was removed by the Soviet Armenian government of Yakov Zarobyan in 1962 and replaced in 1967 by Ara Harutyunyan's monumental Mother Armenia statue. As historian Razmik Panossian notes, "the symbolic switch from Soviet monuments to national ones took place in 1962 when the huge statue of Stalin was removed from a hill overlooking Yerevan. In 1967 an equally large statue of Mother Armenia, sword in hand, was erected in its place, staring at Mount Ararat." (Panossian, *The Armenians*, 349.) Zarobyan did not rush in removing the statue and approached the matter carefully, out of sensitivity to neighboring Georgia, especially in the aftermath of the Tbilisi events of March 1956. According to Zarobyan's son, Nikita, his father was "was aware that this action was a delicate matter for Armenia, and that haste could prompt a negative reaction from our Georgian neighbors." He noted that a "sense of political tact cautioned him to not rush in removing Stalin's sculpture." The Georgians in turn "appreciated this gesture" from Zarobyan. (see Nikita Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha* [Yakov Zarobyan and His Era] (Yerevan: Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University (RAU), 2008), 92-93).

<sup>141</sup> *Sovetakan Hayastan*, No. 8, Mart 1954 [Soviet Armenia, No. 8, March 1954] (Armenchronicle, 1954).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

quoted, to laughter from the audience, Hovhannes Tumanyan's poem *The Dog and the Cat* in Armenian when discussing the need to improve services in Armenia.<sup>143</sup> However, most of his address was delivered in Russian. As Sergo Mikoyan recalled:

When talking with his mother, who did not speak Russian well, or with his wife – when they spoke of things not intended for children's ears – my father, of course, spoke Armenian. However, the new Armenian language, having adopted modern terminology, had already overtaken my father's native language, which he spoke at home in the village, in the theological seminary and even at meetings in Baku in 1918-1919. This development made it difficult for him to speak about certain topics. Therefore, when speaking at electoral meetings in Yerevan, when he was elected as a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, he only began speaking in Armenian, then switched to Russian, and then ended in Armenian.<sup>144</sup>

Beginning in February 1954, at least four drafts of the speech were composed by Mikoyan before he delivered the final version in Yerevan.<sup>145</sup> The draft material is significant as it highlights the evolution of Mikoyan's thought and provides a raw, unfiltered, and more direct version of the views that he publicly expressed. During the editorial process, sometime in February, Mikoyan also penned an overview on Armenian national issues, with the intention of eventually including all or part of it in the final speech.<sup>146</sup> Sections of that latter text concerning Raffi and Patkanyan found their way into the second, third, and fourth drafts of Mikoyan's speech, while the thoughts that he expressed in the text regarding the Armenian Genocide and Russian-Armenian relations

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<sup>143</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, ll. 38-40.

<sup>144</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu [Anastas Mikoyan – A Life Devoted to the People]" (unpublished manuscript, Autumn 2009), typescript, 673.

<sup>145</sup> For the first and earliest known draft of Mikoyan's speech, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, ll. 2-98. For the second draft, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, ll. 60-165. For the third draft, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1083, ll. 1-89. For the fourth draft, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, ll. 2-55. The second and third drafts were produced by Mikoyan only one day apart from each other (March 5 and March 6) and are virtually identical. Both share the same typewritten texts and mostly the same handwritten editorial comments with only minor differences.

<sup>146</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, ll. 321-327.

eventually found their way into his memoirs.<sup>147</sup> The section into which Mikoyan inserted this text would also become the most pivotal part of his address. It was the final portion of the speech, entitled *Global Strengthening of the Friendship of Peoples*, which Mikoyan originally called *Friendship of Peoples: Questions of Armenia*.<sup>148</sup> In this concluding portion, lasting approximately 15 minutes, Mikoyan hailed the great success of the Soviet nationality policy, calling it the “foundation of the power and invincibility of the socialist multinational state.” He also proclaimed that “the elimination of centuries-old national discord, the consolidation of all the peoples of the USSR into one fraternal family has been one of the greatest achievements of our Soviet social system.”<sup>149</sup> However, his statement reflected his aspirations for the Soviet system more than the existing reality, and he was aware of that, given his knowledge of the brutal deportations of entire national groups by Stalin and Beria during the war.<sup>150</sup>

Mikoyan saved his greatest words of praise for Lenin and the historical role of the Russian people in unifying all the peoples across its vast Eurasian space. Notably, he gave only a passing honorable mention to Stalin for his role in the nationality policy, placing much greater emphasis on Lenin.<sup>151</sup> Invoking his own revolutionary youth, Mikoyan then applauded the Communist Party and the Russian working-class for leading the struggle for the freedom of the working peoples of the Caucasus against the tsarist “prison of nations” as well as the “Musavat-Dashnak-Menshevik counter-revolutionaries” and “Anglo-

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<sup>147</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 195.

<sup>148</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, l. 1.

<sup>149</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 39-40.

<sup>150</sup> Mikoyan's role in rehabilitating deported nations, especially the Chechens and the Ingush, will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

<sup>151</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 40. In fact, despite Mikoyan's de-emphasis, Stalin played an influential role in the development of the Soviet nationality policy, as noted by several historians, such as Francine Hirsch, Terry Martin, and Yuri Slezkine.

Turkish and all other interventionists.” Invoking the 1918 Baku Commune, Mikoyan emphasized the “feat of the courageous 26 Baku commissars, heroically killed by the interventionists’ bullets, will never be eradicated from our memory.”<sup>152</sup> He also quoted Lori-born Armenian writer Hovhannes Tumanyan, “a champion of the friendship of peoples” and a “devotee of internationalism” who invoked the great Armenian bard Sayat-Nova. “It is not by chance that the great *ashugh* [bard] Sayat-Nova wrote his songs both in Armenian, and in Georgian, and in Azerbaijani,” Mikoyan told his audience.<sup>153</sup>

After again condemning Dashnak, Musavatists, Menshevik, and even Ukrainian counterrevolutionary nationalists, he singled out the most “despicable agent of international imperialism” of them all – Beria. Beria, Mikoyan told his Armenian listeners, “worked to tarnish sacred feeling of the friendship of the peoples of the USSR, to undermine the alliance between peoples, and, above all with the Russian people, to intensify bourgeois nationalist elements in the Union republics and in particular in Transcaucasia. In the company of international spies can be found, as on Noah’s Ark, ‘two of every creature.’”<sup>154</sup>

The reference to the Genesis flood narrative of Noah’s Ark referred to Mount Ararat, the spiritual and cultural symbol of Armenians, visible from Yerevan but located

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 41. For the definitive account of the history of the Baku Commune, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Baku Commune, 1917-18: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

<sup>153</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga*, 41. For a good biographical sketch of Sayat-Nova, see Agop J. Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, and Nourhan Ouzounian, eds. *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. II: From The Eighteenth Century To Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 869-880. For a good biographical sketch of Tumanyan, see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 619-622.

<sup>154</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga*, 42.

across the border in Turkey.<sup>155</sup> Mikoyan related his Noah's Ark reference to contemporary Cold War geopolitics, reminding his audience of Armenia's position bordering NATO-member Turkey:

By the way, Noah's Ark also comes to mind because, as the newspapers have continuously reported, American 'scientific expeditions' are now underway to systematically search for the ark near the border with Armenia, referring to the fact that forefather Noah supposedly anchored his ship at Ararat. Well, how can you not remember the words of that remarkable friend of the Armenians, the great Russian writer Aleksandr Griboedov, who once wrote 'could you not find a better place to walk?'<sup>156</sup>

The last line, from the character of Pavel Famusov in Griboedov's *Woe from Wit*, implied a suspiciously close encounter thinly disguised as an innocent coincidence, and was greeted with a mix of laughter and applause from the Armenian audience.<sup>157</sup>

Then came the essence of Mikoyan's speech, in which he would articulate the framework for what would eventually become the Soviet nationality policy under Khrushchev. Although the Soviet government would fight against "dangerous expressions" of "bourgeois nationalism," Mikoyan also stressed that it had to wage an equal struggle against what he called "national nihilism," i.e., indifference toward national cultures and national sensitivities. In the earliest draft of Mikoyan's speech, the phrase that he

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<sup>155</sup> Until the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920, Mount Ararat had been part of Russian Armenia. The volcanic massif became part of Turkey as a result of the treaties of Moscow and Kars negotiated between the Bolsheviks and the Turkish Kemalists. (Panossian, *The Armenians*, 248) Nevertheless, Ararat was retained as a national symbol by the Soviet Armenian government. In his memoirs, Khrushchev recalled the ways in which this situation impacted Soviet-Turkish relations: "On the Armenian flag there was a coat of arms depicting Mount Ararat, and Ararat is located on Turkish territory. The Turks even complained to us, asking why Armenia had Mount Ararat on its flag. Was it making a claim to Turkish territory? Our reply was this: 'Why do you have a half moon depicted on your flag? After all, the moon doesn't belong to Turkey, not even half the moon. What's going on? Do you want to take over the whole universe, and did you choose the moon as a symbol of that?' The border disputed was dropped. Istanbul withdrew its objections." (Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Vol. 3: Statesman, 1953-1964*, ed. Sergei Khrushchev, trans. George Shriver (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2007), 467-468.)

<sup>156</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 42.

<sup>157</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, "Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga goroda Erevana," March 11, 1954, Yerevan, Audio recording, 121:48, HAA-KFFP.



employed was “local chauvinism.”<sup>158</sup> However, this term did not encompass everything that Mikoyan sought to address in his speech – specifically, the problem of not only local chauvinistic nationalism, but also indifference to national cultures by the political center. “The Communist Party,” he told his audience, “had always fought against both bourgeois nationalism and national nihilism and nihilistic attitudes towards cultural heritage.” Later in the speech he added, “everyone knows that our Party, recognizing the importance of everything progressive, carefully preserves the cultural heritage of the people. We are critically mastering this heritage and using it for the development of socialist culture.”<sup>159</sup>

Turning to criticism of Stalin-era censorship and suppression of Armenian national culture, Mikoyan continued: “The harm of nihilism is seen on such facts from local life as the attitude towards representatives of Armenian literature Rafael Patkanyan and Raffi. The matter reached such a point that, strangely enough, people with Party cards removed a monument to Patkanyan in Echmiadzin and ceased the publication of works of classical Armenian literature by Raffi, which communicated the life and work of our people.”<sup>160</sup> Echoing Kochar’s earlier appeals at the XVII Congress of the Armenian Communist Party Mikoyan admitted, “of course, there are nationalistic shades in some works of Patkanyan and Raffi. But, on this basis, is it really possible abandon the cultural heritage that reflected a number of pages of the heroic struggle of the Armenian people against the Persian and Turkish enslavers?” He also underscored Raffi’s revolutionary credentials. “It is not by chance,” he said, “that Raffi devoted his first work with admiration to Mikael Nalbandyan, an associate of Chernyshevskii.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, l. 92.

<sup>159</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 43.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

The earliest draft of Mikoyan's speech dating back to February 1954 makes no mention of Raffi or Patkanyan.<sup>162</sup> Mikoyan would invoke these figures, as well as the revolutionary Aleksandr Myasnikyan beginning in the second draft of the speech from March 5.<sup>163</sup> He would not add Charents until the fourth draft of the speech on March 11, the same day that he was to deliver it.<sup>164</sup> For Mikoyan, the memory of Raffi and Patkanyan was a personal matter. His love for Raffi dated back to his seminary days in Tiflis. "I read everything that came into my hands," he recalled in his memoirs. "During the first years at the seminary I read only Armenian books, because I did not yet know Russian. With great interest I read the historical novels of the Armenian writer Raffi – *David Bek*, *Samuel*, and others. I was fascinated by the romantic struggle of the Armenian people against foreign oppressors, and Raffi's novels left a distinct impression on my mind."<sup>165</sup>

Therefore, when Mikoyan first added the two writers to the second draft of his speech, the wording was much stronger and more passionate than in the final version that he delivered in Yerevan. In it, he skewered the former Soviet authorities for their attitudes toward Raffi and Patkanyan:

It would be wrong to dismiss a number of progressive representatives of the Armenian people as reactionaries on the basis that they did not reach revolutionary democratic leaders. One cannot deny the democratic progressive ideas in their works. This denial is due to the fact that some raiders and ignoramuses isolated these leading figures, as well as their worldviews and creative works, from their respective historical contexts. They then proceeded to stick vague labels on them. However, it is impossible to mix the era of Patkanyan and Raffi with the later imperialist era, when the Armenian counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie created its

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<sup>162</sup> See, for example, for the first draft of Mikoyan's speech GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, ll. 85-97, specifically l. 92. At that point in subsequent drafts of the speech, Mikoyan begins to discuss Raffi, Patkanyan, or Myasnikyan, but he does not do so in this earliest draft.

<sup>163</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, ll. 148-165.

<sup>164</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, ll. 45-55.

<sup>165</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 34.

traitorous Dashnak Party. It was such a mixture of different eras that led to the nihilistic denial of the progressive roles of Patkanyan and Raffi.<sup>166</sup>

This precise passage not only appeared in the second and third drafts of Mikoyan's speech, but also in the rough overview that Mikoyan wrote on Armenian history and culture in preparation for the speech.<sup>167</sup> The content of Raffi and Patkanyan from that overview would be added to the speech in the second draft. The only major difference was that, in the overview, Mikoyan also mentioned Armenian writer Stepanos Nazaryan, alongside Patkanyan and Raffi.<sup>168</sup> When Mikoyan added the text to the second and third drafts, he removed Nazaryan from the passage and made a few minor changes to the subsequent paragraph on Raffi, which he marked in blue pencil.<sup>169</sup> The overview that Mikoyan had penned separately also included discussions on Russian-Armenian relations and the Armenian Genocide.<sup>170</sup>

The decision to add Raffi, Patkanyan, and Myasnikyan to the speech piqued the interest of Dmitri Korolev, an assistant to Mikoyan who would later ascend to the post of Trade Minister for the Russian SFSR. Korolev was to accompany Mikoyan on his 1954 Armenian trip, and he became curious about the background of these figures who his boss would invoke in the Yerevan speech. At the request of Korolev, Armenian official A. N. Mnatsanyan prepared a *Note on Cultural Heritage* for him, delivered through the intercession of Mikoyan on March 5.<sup>171</sup> The note provided Korolev with a "brief summary of the attitude towards the heritage of the writers Raffi and Patkanyan, about the destruction

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<sup>166</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 157.

<sup>167</sup> For the overview, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, ll. 321-327.

<sup>168</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, ll. 321-322. For a good biographical sketch of Nazaryan, see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 219-220.

<sup>169</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, ll. 322.

<sup>170</sup> These discussions will be explored in-depth in Chapter 2.

<sup>171</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, ll. 299-303.

of the layout of the History of Armenia and about A. F. Myasnikyan.”<sup>172</sup> By “destruction of the layout of the History of Armenia,” Mnatsanyan was referring to decision by the previous Soviet Armenian government to “burn up the layout of the second volume of the textbook on the history of Armenia” due to the fact that “warm words were said about some Armenian literary, political and military figures of the pre-Soviet era and today.”<sup>173</sup> Mnatsanyan noted that the book’s authors were “accused of making nationalistic mistakes” and added that because of this “national-nihilistic approach” and “incorrect attitude,” Armenian schools had still “not yet received a textbook on the history of their own people.”<sup>174</sup> Mnatsanyan also echoed Mikoyan’s words on the “clearly wrong attitude of the former leadership of the republic” toward Raffi and Patkanyan, and he underscored that “selected misinterpretations” of Patkanyan based on his condemnations of Ottoman oppression “should not serve as a basis for declaring such a great master of artistic words a nationalist.”<sup>175</sup>

Following his discussion of Raffi and Patkanyan, after a three-second pause, Mikoyan dropped a bombshell. He exonerated the purged poet Charents. “The former leadership of the republic was also mistaken about the legacy of the talented Soviet Armenian poet, Yeghishe Charents,” Mikoyan told his audience. The hall erupted in thunderous applause, lasting approximately 30 seconds.<sup>176</sup> The intensity of the applause was such that one could hear in it not only a consensus among Mikoyan’s audience that the cases against Charents and others had been unjust, but also that a new political reality was

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<sup>172</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 303.

<sup>173</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 301.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 302.

<sup>176</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga goroda Erevana,” March 11, 1954, Yerevan, Audio recording, 121:48, HAA-KFFP.

on the horizon. “It was he [Charents] who devoted his work to chanting the revolutionary activities of the masses and the founder of our Party and the Soviet state to the great Lenin,” Mikoyan continued. “Charents’s works are distinguished for their high skill, imbued with revolutionary pathos and Soviet patriotism. They must become the property of the Soviet reader.”<sup>177</sup> This line was received with a second, albeit shorter, round of thunderous applause from Mikoyan’s audience.<sup>178</sup>

Notably, Mikoyan’s references to Charents were entirely absent in the first, second, and third drafts of the speech.<sup>179</sup> When Mikoyan finally did add Charents to the speech in the fourth draft, his language on Charents’s execution was stronger and betrayed his sentiments on the poet much more directly. In the original, he slammed the former Soviet Armenian government’s actions toward Charents as “inadmissible” (*nedopustimii*), but in the final version delivered in Yerevan, he softened his wording, stating that the former Soviet Armenian authorities were “incorrect” (*nepravilnii*) about Charents.<sup>180</sup> Additionally, Mikoyan originally praised Charents for his “*genuinely* revolutionary pathos” in the fourth draft of the speech. The more dramatic sounding “*genuinely*” (*podlinnyi*) was removed by Mikoyan in the final version.<sup>181</sup> It is also significant that, unlike Kochar at the XVII Armenian Party Congress, Mikoyan’s assessments of Charents and his work were entirely positive and not tempered by negative criticisms, indicating that Mikoyan did not agree with the notion that Charents had been guilty of “ideological errors.”

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<sup>177</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga*, 43.

<sup>178</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga goroda Erevana,” March 11, 1954, Yerevan, Audio recording, 121:48, HAA-KFFP.

<sup>179</sup> For the first draft, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, ll. 92. For the second, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 158. For the third, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1083, l. 7. At this point in subsequent versions of the speech, Mikoyan invokes Charents’s name and calls for the writer’s rehabilitation. However, he does not do so at these moments in the first, second, and third drafts.

<sup>180</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 52.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition to Charents, Mikoyan also bemoaned the fact that the “memory of one of our most prominent Party figures is forgotten here – Myasnikyan-Myasnikov, Aleksandr Fedorovich.”<sup>182</sup> Like Charents, the name of Myasnikyan was greeted with loud and enthusiastic applause from the audience.<sup>183</sup> Myasnikyan, an Armenian Old Bolshevik, rose to power in Armenia in the aftermath of the 1921 anti-Bolshevik uprising in the republic led by Garegin Njdeh and the Dashnaks. In his account of Armenia published in 1928, Norwegian humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen praised Myasnikyan for his “wise moderation” in governance, and not without good reason. Myasnikyan played an instrumental role in the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia, the implementation of NEP, and the stabilization and rebuilding of the republic after years of genocide, instability, civil conflict, and war.<sup>184</sup> The beloved revolutionary died in a plane crash in 1925 – an “accident” that, some allege, was the work of Beria.<sup>185</sup> “The working people of Armenia in particular should cherish the blessed memory of Myasnikyan in their hearts,” Mikoyan told his audience.<sup>186</sup> Indeed, to this day, Myasnikyan is fondly remembered in post-Soviet Armenia as a pragmatic and creative leader who brought the republic back on its feet under NEP. However, by the time of Mikoyan’s visit, the statesman’s leading role in Armenia history had been largely forgotten. In his *Note on Cultural Heritage* to Korolev, Mnatsananyan bemoaned the fact that “such a bright face was consigned to oblivion” and that “no works were published on his activities.” In fact, he noted, “only one article was published in *Izvestia* by the Armenian Academy of Sciences in 1947 on the military activities of

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<sup>182</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 43.

<sup>183</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga goroda Erevana,” March 11, 1954, Yerevan, Audio recording, 121:48, HAA-KFFP.

<sup>184</sup> Fridtjof Nansen, *Armenia and the Near East* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928), 316.

<sup>185</sup> Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen: The Tyrant and Those Who Killed for Him* (New York: Random House, 2004), 465-466.

<sup>186</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 44.

Myasnikyan in 1917-21.”<sup>187</sup> Mnatsanyan attributed the neglect of Myasnikyan to the “negative consequences” of national nihilistic approaches toward Armenian history. Instead, he concluded that the Myasnikyan’s work as a Party and state figure and his “tireless efforts to strengthen friendship between the peoples of Transcaucasia and to foster internationalism” should serve “as an example of Party loyalty and the strengthening of international ties between our peoples.”<sup>188</sup> Mikoyan fully concurred with his assessments.

Indeed, if Charents symbolized the cultural wing of Mikoyan’s “return to Leninism” in the nationality sphere, then Myasnikyan symbolized its political wing. Again, like Raffi and Patkanyan, Myasnikyan was not added by Mikoyan until the second draft of his speech.<sup>189</sup> Additionally, during the editing process, Mikoyan added the Russified version of the revolutionary’s name – Myasnikov – in conjunction with his Armenian name, for clarity for non-Armenian readers and listeners.<sup>190</sup> Following his praise of Myasnikyan and the accompanying applause, Mikoyan called on his listeners to “preserve and fully develop” the “wonderful traditions of internationalism that were laid down in the Caucasus before the October Revolution” by Caucasian Bolsheviks of various nationality backgrounds, including Shahumyan, Ordzhonikidze, Spandaryan, Kirov, Azizbekov, Dzhaparidze, and Fioletov.<sup>191</sup> As a precautionary measure, Mikoyan also mentioned Stalin first among these names in one of only four references to the recently-deceased *vozhd* in his entire speech. “Mikoyan made quite an open speech on political and national issues,” recalled Soviet Armenian statesman Yeghishe Astsatryan, then head of the Armenian

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<sup>187</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 300.

<sup>188</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, ll. 300-301.

<sup>189</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 159.

<sup>190</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, l. 93.

<sup>191</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 44.

Central Committee's industry department. "He called on talented Armenian writers Raffi, Patkanyan, and Charents to become the property of Soviet readers, and called for the preservation of the vivid memory of Myasnikyan, Shahumyan, Spandaryan and the traditions of internationalism that they left behind."<sup>192</sup>

In his speech, Mikoyan also raised the issue of language, a potentially sensitive topic that would later become a major issue for the nationality question during Khrushchev's reform of the education system in 1958.<sup>193</sup> Instruction in the union republics had been in the native languages since the Revolution, and knowledge of Russian as a second language became compulsory beginning in 1938.<sup>194</sup> Although strongly defending the position of the native republican languages in his speech and emphasizing voluntary Russian-language instruction, Mikoyan also placed special emphasis on the need for improving the quality of Russian instruction. His position echoed exactly that which appeared in the nationality section of the 1961 Soviet Party Program.<sup>195</sup> "The Russian language is now becoming the property of every Soviet citizen, along with his native language," he said. "It is a powerful means for cultural growth. The task is to improve the quality of teaching Russian. Azeris, Georgians, Armenians, Latvians and Soviet citizens of

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<sup>192</sup> Yeghishe Astatsryan, *XX dar. Hayastani karutsman chanaparhin (Husher)* [20th Century: On the Path Toward the Construction of Armenia (Memoirs)] (Yerevan: Edit Print, 2004), 66.

<sup>193</sup> Jeremy Smith, "The Battle for Language: Opposition to Khrushchev's Education Reform in the Soviet Republics, 1958–59," *Slavic Review* 76, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 983-1002. This issue concerned Article 19 on Khrushchev's educational reform theses, which would give parents the choice to send their children to Russian-language schools, as opposed to schools in the native national languages of the union republics. Local leaders in the republics, especially, in the Baltic states, Georgia, and Armenia, perceived such a move as a potential threat to the position of their native languages.

<sup>194</sup> Smith, "Leadership and Nationalism," 87-88.

<sup>195</sup> Alexander Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme and the fate of Khrushchev's reforms," in *State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Illic and Jeremy Smith (London: Routledge, 2009), 14–15. Mikoyan's role in formulating and refining the CPSU's position on the nationality issue in the 1961 Party Program will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. It is well-documented at GARF in f. 5446, op. 120, dela 1616, 1618, and 1619.



any other nationality who graduate from secondary schools should be fluent in Russian and graduating students at the universities should know it perfectly.”<sup>196</sup>

Mikoyan even went so far as to quote the 1927 poem *Our Youth* by the revolutionary futurist poet Vladimir Maiakovskii, to underscore the importance of Russian.<sup>197</sup> In the first and second drafts of his speech, he also invoked his old revolutionary comrade Stepan Shahumyan to highlight the important role of Russian in breaking down barriers among the many national groups of the USSR. Of Shahumyan, he originally wrote the following:

In his letters to Lenin, Stepan Shahumyan, one of the foremost authorities on the nationality question in our Party, emphasized the enormous importance of the Russian language. Lenin replied to him with an exhaustive answer about the role of Russian in maintaining and developing unity among the working people of the various nationalities populating Russia. Lenin and the Bolsheviks have always spoken out against any form of violence against non-Russian peoples.<sup>198</sup>

This function of learning the language was especially relevant given Mikoyan’s experience witnessing nationalist violence in the Caucasus with the collapse of the tsarist state in 1918-20. It also informed the nationality policy framework that he articulated to his audience, balancing liberalized national expression with controls against national chauvinism. In the final version of his speech, Mikoyan told his audience:

There was once a time, now left forever behind us, when the peoples of Transcaucasia shared blood and tears. The blood shed by our peoples was not in vain. It cemented the friendship of the socialist nations of Transcaucasia and the friendship among all the peoples of our Motherland. Now the time has come when

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<sup>196</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga*, 45.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. In the first, second, and third drafts of his speech, Mikoyan’s quote from Maiakovskii’s poem was originally more extensive. See GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1112, ll. 95-96, GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 161, and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1083, l. 5.

<sup>198</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 160 and d. 1112, l. 94.

it is possible to share the joy and happiness of great creative labor, the creative joy of overcoming difficulties on the path of building communism.<sup>199</sup>

He concluded his speech in Armenian, praising the Communist Bloc, the Soviet Socialist homeland, the friendship of peoples, and the Communist Party.<sup>200</sup> The decision to conclude the speech in Armenian was made by Mikoyan at the last moment, on the day that he was to deliver the speech in Yerevan.<sup>201</sup>

Overall, Mikoyan articulated the framework for what would become the Thaw-era nationality policy: a return to a policy of greater national expression to ensure the unity and ethnic harmony of the state. Expressions of “national chauvinism” in the vein of the Dashnak and Musavatist “counterrevolutionaries” or irresponsible (or even purposefully damaging) nationality policies by Soviet political figures such as Beria would be swiftly condemned. At the same time, great national writers, like the Armenian Raffi, Nalbandyan, or Patkanyan, would be celebrated and expressions of “national nihilism” would not be tolerated. “Mikoyan’s point was that ‘national nihilism’ is just as wrong as nationalism,” wrote historian Razmik Panossian. “This episode showed (a) how ready and enthusiastic the Armenians were, with their latent nationalism, to answer Mikoyan’s call; (b) that Mikoyan, a high-ranking Soviet leader, harboured such sentiments himself and expressed them as soon as an opportune moment rose and; (c) that the communist formula defining the relationship between the people, the nation and socialism could easily lend itself to nationalistic interpretations.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 45.

<sup>200</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga goroda Erevana,” March 11, 1954, Yerevan, Audio recording, 121:48, HAA-KFFP.

<sup>201</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 55.

<sup>202</sup> Panossian, *The Armenians*, 288-289.

Within the union, Mikoyan placed special emphasis on the role of the Russian core as the “advanced” unifying force, or the glue, holding together the entire multinational character of the state – in short, they were to be the “first among equals.” The ideology that undergirded this new policy would be the idea of the “return to Leninism,” and who better to represent the faithfulness to Lenin’s vision than the poet Yeghishe Charents (the cultural wing of the return) and the revolutionary Aleksandr Myasnikyan (the political wing of the return), both of whom were major symbols of NEP in the Armenian context? The fact that Charents was a prominent victim of Stalin’s Purge in Armenia made the ideological message doubly significant. It was a signal that the country was not only “returning to Leninism,” but that Stalin was an aberration from Lenin’s true vision of the revolution and that it was now possible for former “enemies” to become “heroes” again. Therefore, the speech not only articulated the essence of the new post-Stalin nationality policy, but also helped create the circumstances for the broader re-assessment of Stalin that Khrushchev would deliver in 1956. It was also ironic that Mikoyan delivered the speech for the voters of the *Stalin* okrug of Yerevan (which would eventually be renamed the “Lenin okrug” by his 1962 visit). “My father was the first to deliver and free his homeland Armenia from the fear of the ‘Great Terror’,” recalled Sergo Mikoyan. “It was he who [in 1954] reprimanded the ideologists who had not yet been released from their inertia.”<sup>203</sup>

### **Coming in from the Cold: The Impact of the Speech on De-Stalinization**

The significance of the speech was not lost on those who heard it. To victims of family members of Stalin’s Purge, the speech, and specifically the reference to the poet Charents,

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<sup>203</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 113.

was a cue that the government (and Mikoyan specifically) would be willing to re-investigate cases of victims of Stalin's Purge. As noted earlier, Mikoyan had already received numerous rehabilitation requests from those in his Caucasian Old Bolshevik circle, many of whom were of Armenian background. However, immediately after his March 1954 speech in Yerevan, he received a "rash of letters from the relatives of Caucasian Old Bolsheviks" at his door.<sup>204</sup> Charents's close friend, artist Regina Ghazaryan, recalled that "it was Mikoyan who, for the first time after many years of silence, uttered the name *CHARENTS* in his speech at the Opera House. Accompanied by the heartfelt joy and enthusiastic applause of the audience, it was he who noted the importance of Charents's legacy and who called for his works to be republished."<sup>205</sup> Ghazaryan was personally entrusted by Charents to hide his unpublished manuscripts after his arrest. She buried them, but Mikoyan's speech inspired her to exhume them from their place of hiding.<sup>206</sup> In the words of scholar Vartan Matiossian, "[after] sixteen years of silence, Mikoyan's reference [to Charents] was an explicit signal to bring the poet back to life."<sup>207</sup>

Moreover, in the words of historian Mary K. Matossian, Soviet Armenian leaders "took their cue" from Mikoyan.<sup>208</sup> Anticipating an increased number of letters, Mikoyan worked closely with them to establish a review commission in the republic in his name on March 18, only seven days after the speech. It was to consist of several high-level Soviet Armenian officials, among them Armenian First Secretary Suren Tovmasyan, Chairman of the Armenian Council of Ministers Anton Kochinyan, Deputy Secretary of the Armenian

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<sup>204</sup> Casper, "The Bolshevik Afterlife", 54.

<sup>205</sup> Regina Ghazaryan, "Husher Charentsi masin" [Memories of Charents], in *Charentsi het: Husher* [With Charents: Memoirs], ed. Davit Gasparyan (Yerevan: Nairi, 1997), 357.

<sup>206</sup> Ghazaryan, "Husher Charentsi masin", 357.

<sup>207</sup> Vartan Matiossian, "A Tale of Neglected Relation: Yeghishe Charents and Constant Zarian," in *Yeghishe Charents: Poet of the Revolution*, ed. Marc Nichanian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 235.

<sup>208</sup> Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies*, 201.

Central Committee Hratch Margaryan, Secretary of the Armenian Central Committee for Industry Yakov Zarobyian, and First Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Council of Ministers Artavazd Bunyatyan.<sup>209</sup> On April 3, Tovmasyan sent a letter to Mikoyan's secretary, indicating the efforts of the committee to forward certain letters to the respective state bodies of the Armenian Republic, including the Yerevan City Council and the Soviet Armenian Council of Ministers, Interior Ministry, Procurator, and Central Committee.<sup>210</sup> Grievances forwarded to the Interior Ministry dealt with "complaints of improper eviction to the Altai Territory" and those to the Procurator dealt with "incorrect actions of judicial investigative bodies." Grievances forwarded to the departments of the Central Committee dealt with "incorrect dismissals and employment" and those to the Department of Party Organization with "refusal of admission to the Party."<sup>211</sup>

However, appeals to Mikoyan were not limited to questions of political rehabilitations. Soviet Armenian citizens also sent Mikoyan letters regarding socioeconomic concerns within the Armenian Republic, such as the shortage in housing, which he addressed in his speech.<sup>212</sup> In fact, of the 430 letters addressed to Mikoyan from Soviet Armenian citizens, 184 (43%) concerned housing, 33 (8%) concerned employment,

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<sup>209</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 34, d. 54, l. 26 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1099, l. 1.

<sup>210</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1099, l. 2.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> In his speech, Mikoyan announced plans by the Soviet government to increase housing construction to meet a major post-war housing demand not only in Armenia, but throughout the USSR (A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 36). Predictably, his words had resonance not only in Armenia, but also outside the republic. V. A. Golunskaiia, Chairwoman of the Local Committee of the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (today the National Library of Russia) in Leningrad wrote to Mikoyan on September 9, 1954 inquiring about the progress of the housing plans that he announced in his Yerevan speech. "Many employees of the library, and, perhaps, many residents of Leningrad and other large cities," she wrote, "are in dire need of living space, and some of our employees do not have living space at all. As a result, they are forced to huddle in corners with strangers." (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1098, l. 19) For more on the Khrushchev government's response to the housing issue, see Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Washington, D.C. and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

and 17 (4%) concerned improvements in Yerevan and its vicinity.<sup>213</sup> In his letter, Tovmasyan stated that it was “necessary for the secretaries of the [Armenian] Central Committee to consider and accept the requests of citizens who have appealed to Comrade Mikoyan to receive him, as well as to consider their complaints regarding the improvement of the city of Yerevan and its surroundings.”<sup>214</sup> The socioeconomic aspect of the commission is noteworthy, especially given Mikoyan’s extensive involvement in Armenian infrastructural developments during the Thaw.<sup>215</sup>

Mikoyan also forwarded additional letters to the Soviet Armenian government that were given to him by locals during his Armenia visit. “I am sending you letters from citizens that I received during my trip to Armenia,” Mikoyan wrote in a letter to Anton Kochinyan on June 13, 1954. “Please give them direction.”<sup>216</sup> Moreover, not only did he forward appeals to the Soviet Armenian leadership, but he also expressed a desire to be actively updated about the findings and outcomes. “I am sending you letters of citizens received in my name,” Mikoyan wrote to Kochinyan in May 1954. “I ask you to take charge of, and to consider, these letters and to inform the applicants and me about the results of these re-examinations.”<sup>217</sup> However, of the appeals that Mikoyan received, he took a much more active interest in those cases relating to rehabilitations than those relating to socioeconomic problems, such as pensions.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1099, l. 3.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> This issue is examined in the context of Mikoyan’s Armenian patronage network in Chapter 3.

<sup>216</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1104, l. 42.

<sup>217</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1104, l. 47.

<sup>218</sup> For instance, in a letter to Kochinyan from June 1954 referring to letters from Soviet Armenian citizens on pensions, Mikoyan originally instructed his colleague in Yerevan to “inform the applicants and me” of the outcomes. However, Mikoyan later decided to cross out the “and me” part. (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1104, l. 54)

In addition to the cases in Armenia, Mikoyan also closely followed the status of hundreds of other rehabilitation-related cases outside the republic, many sharing a connection with his old Bakuvian/Caucasian revolutionary network. From the numerous lists of individual cases from both Armenia and throughout the USSR, Mikoyan forwarded each one to the respective state bodies and individuals best equipped to resolve them, including Kochinyan, Soviet Procurator General Roman Rudenko, and others.<sup>219</sup> He personally signed off on virtually every single case meticulously in his characteristic blue pencil.<sup>220</sup> “I was astonished,” Mikoyan recalled in his memoirs. “There was never a single instance in which a case that I sent on was denied rehabilitation.”<sup>221</sup> The depth of his involvement in this process as extensively evidenced by his personal signatures on these lists stands as a testament to the passion and seriousness with which he approached the de-Stalinization and rehabilitation processes.<sup>222</sup>

Mikoyan’s speech and his review of these cases set the stage for what happened next. A key figure in the subsequent rehabilitation processes was Levon Shahumyan, the son of Mikoyan’s revolutionary mentor, Stepan. A “courageous and active man” with a “great sense of humor,” Shahumyan was regarded by Mikoyan as a “younger brother since 1918.”<sup>223</sup> A fellow Armenian and the deputy editor-in-chief of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, he served as the conduit through which many family members of repressed persons contacted. “Through Mikoyan, my father helped many people,” recalled

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<sup>219</sup> In his memoirs, Mikoyan claims to have only sent requests to Rudenko, but extensive documentation in GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1104 also shows that he forwarded requests to other Party leaders, especially Anton Kochinyan in cases specifically related to Armenia.

<sup>220</sup> These lists, with Mikoyan’s personal signature next to virtually every case, form the vast bulk of the documents in GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1104.

<sup>221</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 637.

<sup>222</sup> For a closer examination of Mikoyan’s role in the rehabilitation process, see Casper, “The Bolshevik Afterlife”.

<sup>223</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Aleksi Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu,’” 70.

Shahumyan's daughter Tatiana, the future orientalist who was a teenager at the time of his rehabilitation efforts.<sup>224</sup> In his eulogy for Shahumyan in 1971, Mikoyan praised him for making "an invaluable contribution to the cause of correcting subjective distortions in the history of the Party and for restoring the memory of those outstanding revolutionaries who fell victim to the cult of personality and who were then completely rehabilitated."<sup>225</sup> "We shared the same views on many questions, and our trust for each other was unlimited," Mikoyan recalled. "Once, I discussed with him the state of affairs with regard to rehabilitations. I told him that all the cases with which I had dealt had been reviewed and that the people turned out to be innocent. But I also found that many were members of the Central Committee or People's Commissars."<sup>226</sup> He added that such cases were dealt with "at the request of the children and widows of these individuals."<sup>227</sup>

Mikoyan knew that Shahumyan had "an excellent memory" and that he was "himself a living encyclopedia, especially on questions related to the history of the Party."<sup>228</sup> Therefore, six months before the XX Party Congress, Mikoyan asked him to compile information on the number of delegates in attendance at the XVII Party Congress and the number of those who were subsequently repressed. "After all," noted Mikoyan, "this [the XVII Congress] was in 1934, when there were no longer anti-party groupings or disagreements, when there was total unanimity within the Party. Therefore, it was important to see what happened to the delegates of this Congress."<sup>229</sup> Mikoyan also asked Shahumyan to compile a list of "members and candidates for membership of the Party's

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<sup>224</sup> Tatiana Shahumyan, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Moscow, February 12, 2020.

<sup>225</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 154.

<sup>226</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 637.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 153.

<sup>229</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 637.



Central Committee who were elected at this Congress, and then repressed.” Mikoyan recalled decades later that it was important for him to know such information “in order to go to the XX Party Congress with real facts in hand regarding the fate of these two categories of leading individuals.”<sup>230</sup>

After researching the subject for about a month, Shahumyan brought his findings to Mikoyan. What Mikoyan saw horrified him:

The picture was terrifying. Most of the delegates to the XVII Party Congress and members of the Central Committee had been repressed. It shocked me. For several days, I could not get the thought of these findings out of my head. I thought ‘How could it have happened? Why did Stalin do this to people who he knew well?’ In short, I made all sorts of guesses, but none of them suited me and all failed to convince me. I thought of the responsibility that we bore and what we needed to do to prevent this from happening in the future.<sup>231</sup>

Of course, it must be noted that Mikoyan was obviously not unaware of the Purges, as this quote might imply outside of its context. Such conclusions are contradicted by the evidence, including the fact that Mikoyan (1) openly discussed his involvement in the Purges in Armenia in his memoirs, (2) was already involved in facilitating rehabilitation requests at this time, and (3) invoked the former “enemy” Charents in his March 1954 speech. However, it would be accurate to say that he was shocked by the scale of the Purges, the full murderous extent of which he did not know or comprehend until the 1950s. Mikoyan expressed this same astonishment when he met privately with rehabilitated Old Bolsheviks during his March 1964 trip to Baku. Significantly, his words and sentiments at that meeting reflected those that he would express in his memoirs years later. “Stalin

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

personally knew many, trusted many,” he told the Old Bolsheviks, “but then went on to destroy them. It is still difficult to understand how this could have happened.”<sup>232</sup>

Mikoyan’s reaction was amplified by the accounts of returning political prisoners who advised him, and eventually Khrushchev, on the details of Stalin’s crimes and the horrors of the Gulag. These persons became informally known as “Khrushchev’s zeks” – *zeks* referring to former political prisoners.<sup>233</sup> Again, it was Shahumyan who played the decisive role. “It was Shahumyan who brought to me Olga Shatunovskaia, who I knew since 1917, and Aleksei Snegov, who I knew since the 1930s,” wrote Mikoyan.<sup>234</sup> At the time, the Kremlin was an “impenetrable fortress” and so Shahumyan’s Moscow apartment served as an oasis and a key location where Mikoyan could meet with Gulag returnees like Snegov and Shatunovskaia. The environment was such that both former prisoners were addressed in the informal “you” by Mikoyan and Shahumyan during their discussions as well as nicknames like “Olya” and “Alyosha.”<sup>235</sup> Shahumyan’s daughter Tatiana even knew Shatunovskaia as “Aunt Olya.”<sup>236</sup>

These meetings at the Shahumyan apartment proved to be revealing for Mikoyan and others who attended them. As Mikoyan recounted:

They [Shatunovskaia and Snegov] opened my eyes to many things. They told me about their arrests, about the torture used by the NKVD during interrogations, and about the fate of dozens of mutual acquaintances and hundreds of strangers. Olga related one episode to me that helped me realize that the vast majority of those repressed were not guilty of anything. She was sitting in a women’s camp. One time, among the prisoners, there was a rumor that they [the authorities] had brought in a real Japanese spy. Everyone ran to look at her and began to ask: ‘Are you really

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<sup>232</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 15.

<sup>233</sup> Cohen, *The Victims Return*, 87-89.

<sup>234</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 636.

<sup>235</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Aleksei Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu’,” 70.

<sup>236</sup> Tatiana Shahumyan, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Moscow, February 12, 2020.

a spy?’ She replied angrily: ‘Yes! And at least I know why I’m here! And you damned communists are dying here for nothing. But I don’t feel sorry for you!’<sup>237</sup>

Mikoyan was stunned by such stories. “My father even called over my mother,” recalled Sergo Mikoyan. ““Ashkhen, come here, listen to what Olya is saying.””<sup>238</sup> Sergo also recounted that “for the [returning] innocent victims, the apartment of Lev Stepanovich and his wife Elena Iulianovna, an unusually sincere and wise woman, in the ‘House on the Embankment’ was easily accessible.”<sup>239</sup> Tatiana Shahumyan also recalled the frequent presence of Gulag returnees at the family apartment.<sup>240</sup>

It was in 1954, after his father’s Yerevan speech, that Sergo Mikoyan first met Snegov at the Shahumyan apartment. He recalled that he “did not look like a broken man at all” and “on the contrary, behaved like a winner. And he was: it was he who defeated his ‘torture masters’ – the entire repressive system of the Gulag.” Indeed, Sergo noted that “in his seventy-odd years of age, Snegov was energetic and mobile, as if he were thirty years younger.”<sup>241</sup> Snegov, who Sergei Khrushchev later credited with being the “catalyst” for de-Stalinization, had long known both Khrushchev and Mikoyan.<sup>242</sup> Mikoyan even unsuccessfully attempted to save Snegov during the Purges.<sup>243</sup> During Beria’s trial, the government brought him out of exile in order to testify on Beria’s manifold crimes. When Beria saw Snegov in the court room, he was stunned. “You are still alive?” he allegedly snarled, to which Snegov replied “It must have been a glitch in your apparatus.”<sup>244</sup> Now,

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<sup>237</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 636.

<sup>238</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Aleksei Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu,’” 71.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>240</sup> Tatiana Shahumyan, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Moscow, February 12, 2020.

<sup>241</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Aleksei Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu,’” 69.

<sup>242</sup> Sergei Khrushchev, *Reformator* [Reformer] (Moscow: Veche, 2016), 353.

<sup>243</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Aleksei Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu,’” 69-70.

<sup>244</sup> Roy Medvedev, *Khrushchev. Politicheskaia biografiiia* [Khrushchev: A Political Biography], ed. Semyon Reznik (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1986), 69.

after a brief exile in the Komi Republic after the trial, Snegov was free and would play a decisive role in the de-Stalinization process.<sup>245</sup>

After these meetings with Shatunovskaia and Snegov, Mikoyan decided to bring the former political prisoners to Khrushchev to convince him to take action. “I helped arrange for Shatunovskaia and Snegov to meet with Khrushchev,” Mikoyan recollected. “He [Khrushchev] knew Olga since his work in Moscow and he knew Snegov even earlier than that.”<sup>246</sup> After hearing Snegov and Shatunovskaia, Khrushchev, like Mikoyan, became convinced of the need to act. Sergo stated that both men “learned about many things for the first time, including the scale of the repressions, the ‘methods of interrogation’, the innocence of almost every convict, the barbaric conditions of the prisoners’ existence, and the mass death of people from hunger, cold, and repression within the camp system.”<sup>247</sup> Mikoyan recalled that “these two people [Shatunovskaia and Snegov] were undeservedly ‘dropped out of history.’ They played a major role in our ‘enlightenment’ in 1954-1955 and in our preparations for discussing the question of Stalin at the XX Congress in 1956.”<sup>248</sup> Snegov in particular saw the XX Party Congress as decisive. “If they should fail to dethrone Stalin at this congress, the first after the death of this tyrant, and if they fail to talk about his crimes, then they will be remembered in history as his willing accomplices,” Snegov maintained. “Only by exposing Stalin’s role will they convince the party that they were unwitting accomplices.” According to Sergo, Snegov “persistently convinced Khrushchev and Mikoyan of this idea.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Matthew E. Lenoe, *The Kirov Murder and Soviet History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 562.

<sup>246</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 636.

<sup>247</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Aleksi Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu,’” 72.

<sup>248</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 636.

<sup>249</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Aleksi Snegov v bor’be za ‘destalinizatsiiu,’” 77. See also Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 277-278, and Smith, *Moscow 1956*, 32-34.

Meanwhile, the rehabilitation commission tasked with reviewing Charents's case took Mikoyan's March speech into their considerations, emphasizing not only his call to rehabilitate Charents, but also on his denunciations of "national nihilism" and his references to Raffi, Patkanyan, and Myasnikyan.<sup>250</sup> It was on March 9, 1955 that Charents was officially rehabilitated by the Soviet government.<sup>251</sup> His rehabilitation was followed by the exoneration of his exiled wife, Izabella. When Mikoyan arrived in Yerevan and met with Charents's daughter, Arpenik, he asked her why her mother "did not settle in a large metropolitan city after her exile."<sup>252</sup> Arpenik "could not restrain herself" and told him "You ask me why? Surely you know about the ban on exiles from settling in big cities?"<sup>253</sup> In 1967, Izabella, then living in Ufa, learned from the magazine *Ogonek* that Charents's 70th birthday would be marked in Moscow.<sup>254</sup> She immediately flew to the Soviet capital from distant Bashkiria.<sup>255</sup> As she later recounted:

I learned that he was exonerated. And that I was not exonerated. I went to the Writers' House and I told them that I was the wife of the Armenian writer Yeghishe Charents and that I had been living in exile for so many years, and that he [Charents] had been exonerated since 1954. ... And of course, they said: 'We are very glad that you came. You did very well. We will celebrate the anniversary here in twenty days. You will stay for the anniversary. We will give your appeal to your local leadership and they will do everything for you.' And so it happened.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> HAA f. 1191, op. 1, d. 962, l. 178.

<sup>251</sup> HAA f. 1191, op. 1, d. 962, ll. 195-198.

<sup>252</sup> Arpenik Charents, "Arpenik Charents: "Svetlyi, dobryi obraz ottsa navsegda ostalsia v moei pamiati" [The Bright, Kind Image of My Father Forever Remains in My Memory], *Armenian Museum of Moscow and Culture of Nations*, November 27, 2018, <https://www.armmuseum.ru/news-blog/charents> (accessed July 19, 2020).

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Izabella Charents, "Yeghishe Charentsi kyanki verjin orereh" [The Last Days of Yeghishe Charents], in *Charentsi het: Husher* [With Charents: Memoirs], ed. Davit Gasparyan (Yerevan: Nairi, 1997), 384.

<sup>255</sup> Ghazaryan, "Husher Charentsi masin," 358

<sup>256</sup> I. Charents, "Yeghishe Charentsi kyanki verjin orereh," 384.

On the day of the anniversary in Moscow, Mikoyan arrived with Soviet Armenian official Larisa Stepanyan. “Mikoyan read my appeal,” recalled Izabella. “He told Larisa Stepanyan that Charents’s wife should go to Yerevan and that you should do everything for her in terms of securing an apartment and pension. Decide on everything. And so, I came to Yerevan. I thank our state for helping me with the apartment and the pension.”<sup>257</sup>

Mikoyan also checked in on rehabilitated victims of the Purges in Armenia who had survived. For instance, during his 1962 visit Armenia, he met with Vagharshak Norents, who was also imprisoned in 1937 and then rehabilitated alongside Vahram Alazan and Gurgen Mahari in July 1954.<sup>258</sup> Mikoyan was not only concerned with checking in on the recently rehabilitated, but also on those who he had saved. For example, during the Purges, Mikoyan had protected the Armenian poet Avetik Isahakyan.<sup>259</sup> Upon the death of Isahakyan on October 17, 1957, Mikoyan penned an emotional letter to the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party, expressing his deep bereavement and condolences to the family. It read:

I ask you to accept my expression of *deep* sorrow over the death of the great son of the Armenian people, Avetik Isahakyan. The beloved of the people, the *varpet* [master] Avetik sacredly preserved the best traditions of the centuries-old culture of old Armenia and, through his tireless creative work, made an invaluable contribution to the construction of a new socialist culture in Armenia. The artistic word of Avetik Isahakyan inspired several generations of people, not only in Armenia, but also far beyond its borders. Many songs and poems of Avetik became popular and entered into everyday life, in the flesh and blood of the workers of the city and village. I ask you to convey my sincere condolences to the family of Avetik Isahakyan and the Writers’ Union of Armenia about this grave, irreparable loss.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> GARF, f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 8. For his rehabilitation, see HAA f. 1191, op. 1, d. 962, l. 197.

<sup>259</sup> Ashkhen Mikoyan, “Avetik Isaakyan i Anastas Mikoyan”. For a good biographical sketch of Isahakyan, see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 734-736.

<sup>260</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1268, l. 73. For the telegram that Mikoyan received on Isahakyan’s passing from Eduard Topchyan (First Secretary of the Armenian Writers’ Union), see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1268, l. 74.

Isahakyan's memory apparently remained with Mikoyan for the rest of his life. In 1975, Armenian scholar Khikar Barseghyan presented Mikoyan with a signed copy of his Armenian-language book about his meetings with Isahakyan.<sup>261</sup>

At the XX Party Congress, Mikoyan helped set the stage for Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin by delivering the first attack on the *vozhd* in his February 16 speech.<sup>262</sup> American journalist Harrison E. Salisbury, who personally interviewed Mikoyan, once wrote that "there is no doubt that the wise, battle-scarred Armenian has been the closest man to Khrushchev in the days since Stalin's death. At each step of Khrushchev's rise you could see Mikoyan striking out ahead, testing the ground, as it were, for Khrushchev to follow."<sup>263</sup> Salisbury specifically had in mind Mikoyan's XX Congress speech in which he "first openly attacked Stalin – in terms more sharp, in some respects, than used by Khrushchev."<sup>264</sup> After finishing, Mikoyan was reproached by his brother Artem, a delegate of the Congress. "Anastas, you should not have made such speech," he told him "You were essentially right, but many delegates are not happy with you and they are reprimanding you. Why did you attack Stalin like that? Why should you take the initiative when others don't speak about it? And Khrushchev said nothing like this."<sup>265</sup> Mikoyan responded to him, "You are wrong. And those comrades who are unhappy with my speech are wrong as well. As for Khrushchev, well, he will be giving a report at the closed session and he will speak of even worse things."<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> For the signed book, see RGASPI, f. 84, op. 3, d. 389.

<sup>262</sup> For Mikoyan's speech at the XX Party Congress, see Anastas Mikoyan, *Rech' na XX s'ezda KPSS* [Speech at the XX Congress of the CPSU] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1956).

<sup>263</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury. *To Moscow—and Beyond: A Reporter's Narrative* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), 167.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 642.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

In the years and months leading to the XX Party Congress, Khrushchev worked closely to Mikoyan to carefully prepare everything, with the guidance of individuals like Snegov, Shatunovskaia, and Shahumyan. “Those speeches [at the XX Party Congress] were no accident,” Mikoyan noted in another conversation with Salisbury in the summer of 1967. “They were carefully planned. We fought and fought for that. For three years we carried out a quiet, meticulous investigation—analyzing everything. That’s why the Twentieth Party Congress is so important. That is why every party congress since then and, now, the fiftieth-anniversary declaration reiterate the same principle—the Leninist principle of intraparty democracy.”<sup>267</sup> As Mikoyan spoke these words, Salisbury noticed a “fire in Mikoyan’s eyes.”<sup>268</sup> He ascribed this passion to Mikoyan’s own realization that he too would have become a victim of a new round of purges had Stalin lived to initiate them. However, he also might have noted Mikoyan’s passion for righting the wrongs of Stalinism and rehabilitating its many victims – including those who he knew personally. The Yerevan speech of March 1954 arguably helped set in motion that process.

### **The Impact on Soviet Armenian Cultural Life**

It would be no exaggeration to say that Mikoyan’s speech also effectively signaled the start of the Thaw in Armenia, a period known to Armenians as *znhali zhamanak* (*time of the Thaw*), the Armenian equivalent of the Russian *vremia ottepeli*. Indeed, Armenian writer Ruben Angaladian referred to the address of March 1954 as “the first triumph of justice,

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<sup>267</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury. “Fifty Years That Shook the World” in *The Soviet Union: The Fifty Years*, ed. Harrison E. Salisbury (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), 18.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*



ushering [in] ‘new times’” for the USSR generally and Soviet Armenia specifically.<sup>269</sup> Armenia became one of the first places within the USSR to embrace the liberalism of the era and, as will be seen, some even tested its limits in terms of both democratic freedoms and national expression.<sup>270</sup> As historian Benjamin Tromly wrote regarding the experience of the Thaw in non-Russian republics, “even if it was centered in Moscow, the Thaw was a pan-Soviet rather than ethnically Russian phenomenon. The values proclaimed by its adherents – moral introspection, culture, openness – made it open to participation by non-Russian intellectuals.”<sup>271</sup> Already only a few weeks after Mikoyan’s speech, Armenians began to taste the nectar of Thaw-era liberalization, with Charents again serving as the symbol of its new freedoms. On April 1, 1954, Hratch Margaryan ordered the printing of 10,000 copies of the Armenian translation of Mikoyan’s speech for public distribution.<sup>272</sup>

The impact of the speech on Soviet Armenian cultural life was immediate. On April 14, *Kommunist* reported that actor Suren Kocharyan performed a dramatic reading of Charents’s “Lenin and Ali” and part of his “Commander Shavarsh” in Yerevan.<sup>273</sup> That same year, the very first collection of Charents’s poems – *Lenin: Poems and Verses* – was

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<sup>269</sup> Ruben Angaladian, *The Armenian Avant Garde of the 1960s: Seven Fates*, trans. Kenneth MacInnes (Yerevan: R. Angaladian, 2006), 20.

<sup>270</sup> The Thaw in Armenia also arguably set the stage for the major Yerevan demonstrations of 1965 and the Karabakh movement of 1988. As Razmik Panossian has written, “the Yerevan protests [of 1965] did not occur in a vacuum. They were a product of the post-Stalin thaw and the slow emergence of national issues in the late 1950s and early 1960s.” (Panossian, *The Armenians*, 323). Similarly, Armenian scholar Harutyun Marutyan stressed the importance of the Thaw for enabling Soviet Armenian writers to more overtly express national themes in their literary works. (Marutyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity, Vol. I: The Memory of Genocide and the Karabagh Movement*, trans. Nune Torosyan, Yerevan: ‘Gitutyun’ Publishing House of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, 2009), 38).

<sup>271</sup> Benjamin Tromly, *Making of the Soviet Intelligentsia: Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 225.

<sup>272</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 34, d. 54, l. 34.

<sup>273</sup> S. Takaryan, “Proizvedeniia Ov. Tumanyana i E. Charentsa v hudozhestvennom chtenii” [“Works of H. Tumanyan and Ye. Charents in Dramatic Reading”], *Kommunist*, March 14, 1954, 3.

published in Yerevan since his arrest in 1937.<sup>274</sup> This publication was followed by a large volume of Charents's collected works also published in 1954 and assembled by Eduard Topchyan, Soghomon Tarontsi, and Garegin Hovsepyan, with design by artist Hakob Kojoyan.<sup>275</sup> Additionally, a work of literary criticism of Charents was published by Norayr Dabaghyan, who, like Kochar, had earlier denounced Charents, Bakunts, and other writers in 1937, and now attempted to change his image.<sup>276</sup> 1954 also saw artist Hrachya Rukhkyan paint the first portrait of Charents since the 1930s.<sup>277</sup> On January 30, 1955, *Kommunist* published a full Russian translation of Charents's *Ballad about Vladimir Il'ich, a Peasant, and a Pair of Boots* (1924).<sup>278</sup>

The Yerevan address also had an impact on those who knew Charents outside of Armenia. In May 1954, only two months after the speech, Mikoyan received a letter from Igor Postupal'skii, a Ukrainian-born literary critic and translator, who was also a former "enemy of the people."<sup>279</sup> In the 1930s, Postupal'skii served as the editor of an anthology of Charents's poetry in Russian translation. In a 1935 letter to Goslitizdat Director Nikolai Nakoriakov, Charents personally requested that Postupal'skii oversee the project, which he hoped would become "one of the best quality translation books published by Goslitizdat."<sup>280</sup> Among those translating Charents's poems for the anthology were Anna

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<sup>274</sup> Yeghishe Charents, *Lenin–Poemner yev Banasteghtsutyunner* [Lenin: Poems and Verses] (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1954).

<sup>275</sup> Yeghishe Charents, *Entir Yerker* [Selected Works], ed. Eduard Topchyan, Soghomon Tarontsi, and Garegin Hovsepyan (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1954).

<sup>276</sup> Norayr Dabaghyan, *Yeghishe Charents* (Yerevan: Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakchutyun, 1954).

<sup>277</sup> For the portrait, see GAT f. Charents, d. 310, l. 1.

<sup>278</sup> Yeghishe Charents, "Ballada o Vladimire Il'iche, muzhike i pare capog" ["Ballad about Vladimir Il'ich, a Peasant, and a Pair of Boots"], *Kommunist*, January 30, 1955, 3.

<sup>279</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1101, ll. 10-18.

<sup>280</sup> Anahit Charents, "Yeghishe Charents. Stat'i. Pis'ma. Dnevnik." [Yeghishe Charents: Articles, Letters, Diaries], *Voprosy Literatury* no. 11 (November 1987): 248-249.

Akhmatova and Boris Pasternak.<sup>281</sup> In a personal letter to Postupal'skii from 1935, Charents praised him for securing Akhmatova's talents for the project. "For me," Charents wrote, "the translations of this great Russian poetess, who has been well-known to me for quite some time, are a great joy, especially since they seem to be very faithful. Please give her my thanks when the occasion arises. I would have written to her myself, but for now it is somehow uncomfortable. Thank you!"<sup>282</sup> However, shortly after Charents's arrest in 1936, Postupal'skii was also arrested by the NKVD, officially due to his flirtations with "Ukrainian nationalism." For his "transgressions," he was sent to the Kolyma, only to be rehabilitated after the war.<sup>283</sup>

In his letter to Mikoyan, Postupal'skii appealed to the Soviet statesman to intervene to ensure the publication of the long-suppressed Charents anthology. Such a publication, he contended, was the very will of Charents. He wrote to Mikoyan that, in Kolyma, he met two Armenian prisoners who conveyed the poet's last wishes to him:

While in the Kolyma, needless to say, I also encountered Armenians – prisoners. It so happened that, at different times, I had opportunity to meet with two Armenians who were sitting in the Yerevan investigative jail with Charents. I do not remember their names, but that is not important. What is important is that these individuals, having recognized my surname, both informed me together that, while in jail, Charents instructed a number of persons to give me his last wishes if any of them should happen to meet me. The first wish was to inform Stalin and Mikoyan, if I have such an opportunity to meet them, that slanderous statements were made against him, Charents. The second wish was to convey to the same two Party and state leaders, that he, Charents, facing death, requests that they rehabilitate him over time – first of all, by publishing his good Russian book, after which his memory will no longer be blackened by various envious people, idiots, cowards, etc. Now you can imagine the feeling of deep satisfaction and genuine excitement that I felt when I read your remarks about Charents.

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<sup>281</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1101, l. 15. For the original manuscript of this work, see RGALI f. 613, op. 1, d. 8159

<sup>282</sup> A. Charents, "Yeghishe Charents. Stat'i. Pis'ma. Dnevnik," 250.

<sup>283</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1101, ll. 12-13.

Dearest Anastas Ivanovich, if I did not write to either the late Stalin or to you earlier, then it was due only to my uncertainty that a letter from an ordinary man could ever reach such a high address, and secondly, to my uncertainty as to whether the ‘time of the Charents’ had already arrived. You know well that, until very recently, despite a certain sense of discontent among the Soviet Armenian intelligentsia and the wider mass of the Soviet Armenian people, all possible opportunists and simply fools in Armenia were *silent* about Charents. But now, with your help, the question of Charents has been resolved in the interests of the people, and I can fulfill my obligation to the late poet in the hope that my message will be heard precisely by those to whom I am addressing.

Dearest Anastas Ivanovich! For many years, as you will agree, I was convinced that Charents, whatever his shortcomings, was not, and could not, be an enemy of our Soviet country. I was just as equally convinced that his creative work, that is Charents’s work, would not be forgotten. Thus, I kept proofs of his Russian book, which in my time was not released for the reasons stated above.<sup>284</sup>

Then, quoting directly from Mikoyan’s speech, Postupal’skii wrote, “in fulfillment of the last will of the ‘talented Soviet Armenian poet’, I appeal to you with a request to assist me in publishing the book of Russian translations of Charents that I have long-prepared in proofs. Naturally, in publication, the text of the book, preserved in the proofs, should be additionally revised and partially updated. Otherwise, the book is essentially ready.”<sup>285</sup>

Signing off on Postupal’skii’s letter, Mikoyan endorsed the book’s publication and forwarded his request to Goslitizdat Director Anatoly Kotov.<sup>286</sup> Mikoyan’s endorsement of the publication, strengthened by his earlier call to rehabilitate Charents, contributed to the process of publishing the work, which had already been underway as early as April 1954. On April 6 of that year, poet Konstantin Simonov, the Secretary of the Soviet Writers’ Union, also called on Kotov to publish the anthology.<sup>287</sup> Praising Charents’s works as “great contributions to multinational Soviet literature,” he lamented that they were

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<sup>284</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1101, ll. 13-15.

<sup>285</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1101, l. 16.

<sup>286</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1101, l. 10.

<sup>287</sup> RGALI f. 613, op. 7, d. 631, l. 2.

“little known to the Russian reader” and that they “had not been published in Russian in over 20 years.”<sup>288</sup> Godlitizdat eventually published the manuscript in 1956.<sup>289</sup>

In January 1956, the newspaper *Kommunist* announced the publication of the first two volumes of a 10-volume set of the works of Raffi. The article quoted from Mikoyan’s speech about the dangers of “national nihilism” and the importance of Raffi’s works to Armenian culture. “The nihilistic attitude of the sociologists towards Raffi’s works now belongs to the past,” wrote the journalist S. Sarinyan. “From the position of a Marxist attitude toward cultural heritage, A. I. Mikoyan condemned this nihilistic view and determined the place of Patkanyan and Raffi in the history of Armenian literature.”<sup>290</sup> Later, after the XX Party Congress, in March 1956, *Kommunist* would announce the publication of a volume of the works of Aksel Bakunts, another major Armenian writer who had been a victim of the Purges.<sup>291</sup>

The former “enemy” Charents had not even been officially rehabilitated for one year when the Soviet Armenian government already began making him the standard by which young Armenian writers should aspire. On the eve of the XX Party Congress of the CPSU, the official report of the XVIII Armenian Party Congress of January 19, 1956 noted that “the works of our literary scholars and critics published during the reporting period have brought some clarity to the assessment of the literary heritage of many writers.” The text continued:

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Yeghishe Charents, *Izbrannoe* [Selected Works] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennyy literatury, 1956).

<sup>290</sup> S. Sarinyan, “K novomu izdaniyu sochinenij Raffi” [“On the New Edition of Raffi’s Works”], *Kommunist*, January 13, 1956, 3.

<sup>291</sup> Gurgen Boryan, “Master novelly” [“Master of Short Stories”], *Kommunist*, March 30, 1956, 3. For a good biographical sketch of Bakunts, see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 988-990.

In 1954, the third volume of 'The History of Armenian Literature' dedicated to the Soviet period was released. Additionally, the Institute of Literature has prepared and already published books on the works of several Soviet writers. Over time, the writings of Charents, Bakunts, Mahari, Norents, Alazan and others were published. The XVII Armenian Party Congress revealed the gross mistakes and distortions in the field of literary criticism that were made in the past and outlined ways to overcome these shortcomings. 1955 saw the beginning of the publication of a 10-volume set of the works of Raffi, and the works of Hakob Paronyan, Krikor Zohrab, Daniel Varuzhan, Ruben Sevak, and Rafael Patkanyan were also published. However, it must be kept in mind that the mere correction of admitted errors cannot solve the large and serious tasks of the continued development of literature and the arts. At the same time, one cannot help but notice that a mood of serenity prevails among our artists, playwrights, composers, and leaders of the Ministry of Culture and the Writers' Union.<sup>292</sup>

Citing one of the "serious shortcomings" in literature and the arts as "a lack of full-fledged works reflecting the life of the working class," the report went on to say that "Armenian literature is rich in wonderful traditions of celebrating the working class, in particular the traditions established by Hakob Hakobyan and Yeghishe Charents. That was in the early years of the industrialization of our country." Noting Armenia's industrialization and the passage of time, the report admonished Armenian writers for "actually forgetting" about the important topic of the workers. "The lack of full-fledged works of art about the working class, the leading force in society, does not honor Armenian writers," it concluded.<sup>293</sup>

One month later, on February 18, during the CPSU XX Party Congress, Armenian First Secretary Tovmasyan delivered a speech sandwiched in-between Mikoyan's and Khrushchev's. Echoing the address that Mikoyan delivered in Yerevan two years earlier, Tovmasyan mentioned Charents and underscored his quote casting Moscow as the "center of the world."<sup>294</sup> Afterwards, in an April 1956 report to the Department of the Union Republic Party Organs of the CPSU Central Committee, Tovmasyan noted that the XX

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<sup>292</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 36, d. 2, l. 57.

<sup>293</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 36, d. 2, ll. 58–59.

<sup>294</sup> RGANI f. 1, op. 2, d. 46, l. 209.

Party Congress and Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin were generally well-received in Armenia, in contrast to the unrest that characterized neighboring Georgia.<sup>295</sup> "The workers, kolkhozniks, and intelligentsia," he wrote, "are unanimous in their agreement with the XX Congress of the CPSU and commit themselves to long-term fulfillment of the plan for the first year of the Sixth Five-Year Plan. Everywhere in the primary party organizations, the communists [of Armenia] unanimously approve Comrade Khrushchev's report made at the XX Congress of the CPSU 'On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences.'"<sup>296</sup>

In fact, Armenian Party activists not only concurred with Khrushchev's conclusions, but went even further by openly voicing scathing denunciations of Stalin. In his earlier report to the Soviet Central Committee from March 1956, Tovmasyan noted that many Party leaders in Armenia "dwelled in detail on the issue of the personality cult and its harmful consequences." They specifically emphasized, "in the spirit of Leninism," the necessity of "teaching communists, especially the younger generation, about the gross mistakes of Stalin."<sup>297</sup> Party activists in Yerevan maintained that Stalin's personality cult did "much harm to the party, the state and the people" and many delivered speeches "that were of a harsh character against Stalin." One slammed Stalin as the "executioner of Lenin's cadres" and that "for his murder of several thousand people, Stalin did not deserve to lie in Lenin's Mausoleum." "He did not fight for Leninism," he said, "and that begs the question: if Lenin's cadres were unable to correct Stalin, but only made Beria an enemy,

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<sup>295</sup> For more background on the reaction in Georgia, see Timothy K. Blauvelt and Jeremy Smith, eds., *Georgia after Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet Power* (London: Routledge, 2017), and Vladimir Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, trans. Elaine McClarnand Mackinnon (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 112-135.

<sup>296</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 44.

<sup>297</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 41.

then, apparently, Stalin was not an instrument in the hands of Beria, but Beria was an instrument in the hands of Stalin.”<sup>298</sup>

Another Armenian comrade stated that for his many misdeeds, Stalin “cannot be a member of the Party” and that “he must be posthumously expelled from the ranks of the CPSU.”<sup>299</sup> Taking their cues from Mikoyan’s criticism of Stalin’s *Short Course* at the XX Party Congress, Party activists in Leninakan (Gyumri) likewise criticized Stalin’s text for its “incorrect” version of history centered on Stalin and its “undeserved” praise for him. In his report, Tovmasyan highlighted specific questions that Armenian Party activists raised related to Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin. The most frequent included “How should we treat the ideological legacy of Stalin?”, “How should we treat the portraits and monuments of Stalin?”, “What is the reaction in Georgia?”, and “How can we explain the absence of any delegation from the League of Yugoslav Communists at the XX Party Congress?” Others noted that the Party charter of the CPSU “obligates all communists to report shortcomings to the Party organs” and asked “why, then, at the XIX Congress of the CPSU or later during Stalin’s life, did the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee not raise the question of his cult of personality?”<sup>300</sup>

Recently rehabilitated Party members added to the chorus of Armenian denunciations of Stalin. One CPSU member, Barseghyan, who had been exiled for 17 years and only recently rehabilitated, argued that Stalin was no different from other “deviationists” like Trotskii, Zinoviev and Kamenev and that “he should have suffered the same punishment as them.” He went on to accuse Stalin of “destroying the best cadres in

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 42.



our country.”<sup>301</sup> However, he also urged caution when dealing with the dismantlement of Stalin’s personality cult, noting that “for many years the cult of Stalin rose before the people and, therefore, the eradication of his name should be carried out gradually.”<sup>302</sup> Another recently rehabilitated Party member, the poet Gurgen Haykuni, negatively described Stalin’s activities during the Civil War period.<sup>303</sup> He also called for the dismissal of the “Stalinist bureaucracy.”<sup>304</sup>

Conversely, Soviet Armenian writer Hrachya Kochar publicly disagreed with Khrushchev’s condemnation of Stalin and “alleged that there were contradictions between the facts that he [Khrushchev] cited and the conclusions that he made.”<sup>305</sup> What these “contradictions” were, Kochar did not specify. For his part, poet Nairi Zaryan criticized members of the Presidium of the Central Committee for not doing enough to stop Stalin. “Who can believe that they have not seen all this?” he asked. “How can one explain the fact that they saw and endured all of this? Out of fear? But does not a coward have the right to act? We cannot forgive cowardice even for an ordinary soldier. An ordinary soldier is shot when he shows cowardice during battle, and when statesmen show cowardice, it leads to a terrible disaster for the people.”<sup>306</sup> Both Kochar’s and Zaryan’s remarks were condemned by the Armenian leadership as “anti-Party” statements.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, ll. 41-42.

<sup>302</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 42.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 553. Also cited by Polly Jones in *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 37.

<sup>305</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 47.

<sup>306</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 553. Also cited by Jones in *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 37.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

However, in his April 1956 report to the Soviet Central Committee, Tovmasyan stated that the denunciations of Stalin were almost going too far and were beginning to turn into “anti-Party” manifestations.<sup>308</sup> In response to the outcome of the Party Congress, he noted that “some communists made plainly erroneous statements in their speeches” and that “certain anti-Party elements tried to use the Party Congress for their own hostile purposes.”<sup>309</sup> For example, Tovmasyan wrote that “some members of the Party organizations” of several educational institutes in the republic, including Yerevan State University, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, School #16 of the Molotov Raion, the Abovyan State Pedagogical Institute “questioned the democratic nature of elections” in the Soviet Union and “declared that Deputies to the Supreme Soviet are not elected by the people, but appointed by the state.” One Party activist at Yerevan State even suggested “changing the procedure for elections to Party bodies,” arguing that the current procedure “allegedly excludes the possibility of free discussion of candidates and real democratic elections.” Another student stated that “there is no real freedom of the press in our country” and, a member of the Party organization of the Yerevan Medical Institute “displayed liberalism” and “departed from Khrushchev’s report” in a published editorial on Khrushchev’s condemnation of Stalin.<sup>310</sup>

Tovmasyan further charged that others at Yerevan State were creating an “unhealthy situation,” which “distracted the attention of some communists” from the “main tasks” of the XX Party Congress.<sup>311</sup> At the party meeting at Yerevan State of March 29-30,

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<sup>308</sup> For the full report, see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, ll. 44-49. The portion dealing with Tovmasyan’s discussion of “anti-Party” manifestations can be found in Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti*, 471-473.

<sup>309</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 46.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 47.

1956, students and faculty used the discussion on Khrushchev's speech as a springboard for testing the limits of the Thaw. For example, the vice-rector of the university raised the issue of Soviet claims to historical Armenian territories in Turkey.<sup>312</sup> Similarly, one lecturer "proposed the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia."<sup>313</sup> Although several statements during the meeting were "condemned by some communists," Tovmasyan nevertheless noted that "nobody reacted [negatively] to the anti-Party fabrications regarding the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Soviet Armenia."<sup>314</sup> One graduate student also highlighted the lack of official Soviet response to the September 1955 Istanbul pogrom in Turkey, in which Greeks, Armenians, and Jews were targeted by organized nationalist mobs. "The government did not stand up for the rights of the Armenian people persecuted in Turkey," he stressed, adding that France had issued its own condemnation.<sup>315</sup>

Armenia's newfound Thaw-era freedoms were then tested to the limit by a young philosophy professor and member of the University Party Committee who poked fun at the limits of Soviet "democracy" as Armenian Party leaders bristled. "Take, for example, the elections that we just held," the speaker told his audience. "The results were announced as follows: 99.99% voted for the Bolshevik bloc of communists and non-party persons. It was

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<sup>312</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 554.

<sup>313</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 47.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 554. Similar complaints about the Soviet response to the Istanbul pogrom were also raised by an Armenian writer at the meeting of the Armenian Writers' Union on the outcome of the XX Party Congress (see Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 551-552). Significantly, as will be discussed in the next chapter, Mikoyan raised the issue of the treatment of the Armenians in Turkey in his meeting with then US Vice-President Richard Nixon in July 1959. His comments indicate that he was aware of the complaints raised by the students at Yerevan State regarding the Istanbul pogrom. See "Historical Documents: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume X, Part 1, Eastern Europe Region; Soviet Union; Cyprus: Document 97. Memorandum of Conversation," *US State Department*, July 25, 1959 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v10p1/d97> (accessed July 21, 2020).

never below 99.99%!” His observations were met with howls of laughter from the students in the audience.<sup>316</sup> Other speakers proceeded to openly criticize Tovmasyan, Arushanyan and other Armenian leaders, and made “slandorous statements” against them and against the bureau of the Central Committee of the Armenian Party. A June 1956 report further noted that “when some communists tried to talk about shortcomings in the work of the university, they were interrupted by loud noise and prevented from speaking, and, on the contrary, demagogic speeches aroused the approval and applause of those present.”<sup>317</sup> The students and activists were later disciplined and reprimanded for their “anti-Party manifestations,” Tovmasyan noted.<sup>318</sup> Ironically, when Tovmasyan fell out of favor with Moscow as Armenia’s First Secretary in November 1960, one of the charges leveled against him by officials in the center was his allegedly relaxed attitude toward “ideological flaws,” including the publication of works by writers such as the popular Paruyr Sevak who they accused of expressing “nationalist tendencies.”<sup>319</sup>

Armenia was not an isolated case. Throughout the USSR, several republics were testing the boundaries for acceptable national expression. In Ukraine, writers in Lviv used Khrushchev’s condemnation of Stalin as a springboard to “demand greater respect for Ukrainians’ language and culture.” However, these Ukrainian intellectuals were more circumspect than their Armenian counterparts and “only joined in this cautious criticism [of Stalin] in 1957.”<sup>320</sup> Nevertheless, the flowering of Ukrainian national expression continued apace and Ukrainian university students, very much like their Armenian peers,

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<sup>316</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti*, 554.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, ll. 47-48.

<sup>319</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 148, l. 43.

<sup>320</sup> Risch, *The Ukrainian West*, 121.

also began to test the limits of Thaw-era freedoms in the nationality sphere.<sup>321</sup> At the same time, in Latvia, local “national communists” pushed for greater Latvian cultural expression within the Soviet socialist context.<sup>322</sup> Throughout the USSR, the rising demands for greater national expression soon elicited responses from Moscow, of which there were different possible paths. One option was to pursue a more coercive line toward nationalism, such as the purge of nationally minded leaders in the republics.<sup>323</sup> However, the Kremlin could also offer more inclusive responses to these demands, as Mikoyan’s invocations of historical narratives in the Caucasus will demonstrate.

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<sup>321</sup> For further information on the growing Ukrainophile movement among students in Ukrainian universities during the Thaw, see Chapter 8 (“Higher learning and the nationalization of the Thaw”) of Tromly, *Making of the Soviet Intelligentsia*, 217-243, and see also Tromly, “An Unlikely National Revival: Soviet Higher Learning and the Ukrainian ‘Sixtiers,’ 1953-65,” *The Russian Review* 68, no. 4 (October 2009): 607-622.

<sup>322</sup> Michael Loader, “The Rebellious Republic: The 1958 Education Reform and Soviet Latvia,” *Journal of the Institute of Latvian History*, 100, no. 3 (November 2016): 113–139.

<sup>323</sup> Michael Loader, “A Stalinist Purge in the Khrushchev Era? The Latvian Communist Party Purge, 1959–1963,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 96, no. 2 (April 2018): 244–282.

## Chapter 2: National Narratives, National Policy

In the Soviet Union of the 1950s, demands for greater national expression were on the rise in different parts of the country. In some instances, as with Latvia's "national communists," such demands expressed themselves through a political struggle with Moscow to negotiate and define the extent of acceptable national expression, a phenomenon that scholars have called a "tug of war."<sup>1</sup> In other cases, these demands expressed themselves in more violent forms, such as the 1956 Tbilisi riots.<sup>2</sup> These developments elicited different responses from Moscow. One response took a coercive line toward nationalism, as evidenced by the 1958 educational reform or the purge of the Party leaderships in republics like Latvia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.<sup>3</sup> Another response took a more inclusive approach, while also advocating coexistence among different national groups. In pursuing the latter response in the context of the Caucasus region, Anastas Mikoyan drew on historical narratives that would highlight the possibilities for national coexistence, as well as the benefits of Soviet socialism for national communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie Kivelson, *Russia's Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 330; and 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*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 79–93.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy K. Blauvelt and Jeremy Smith, eds., *Georgia after Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet Power* (London: Routledge, 2017), and Vladimir Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, trans. Elaine McClarnand Mackinnon (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 112–135.

<sup>3</sup> On the educational reform, see Jeremy Smith, "The Battle for Language: Opposition to Khrushchev's Education Reform in the Soviet Republics, 1958–59," *Slavic Review* 76, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 983–1002, and Michael Loader, "The Rebellious Republic: The 1958 Education Reform and Soviet Latvia," *Journal of the Institute of Latvian History*, 100, no. 3 (November 2016): 113–139. On the purge of the Latvian leadership, see Michael Loader, "A Stalinist Purge in the Khrushchev Era? The Latvian Communist Party Purge, 1959–1963," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 96, no. 2 (April 2018): 244–282. Additionally, in 1959 and 1960 respectively, both Azerbaijani First Secretary Imam Mustafaeu and Armenian First Secretary Suren Tovmasyan were dismissed by Moscow for nationalism-related reasons. On Mustafaeu, see Krista A. Goff, *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 106–108, and on Tovmasyan, see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 148, l. 43

The narratives that Mikoyan promoted among audiences in the Caucasus focused on the period of the 1918-20 Civil War. His authority to speak to this history was enhanced by the fact that he was an eyewitness and participant in it. In the context of Armenia, the narratives that Mikoyan invoked underscored that national identities (i.e., a sense of belonging to a specific ethnic, national, cultural, or ethno-religious community) were not mutually exclusive to a larger all-Union Soviet identity (i.e., a sense of identification with the Soviet state and socialist ideology). As Maïke Lehmann has stressed, these identities came together in the Soviet era to form a “very Soviet hybrid of national and socialist elements,” a phenomenon that she identifies as “Apricot socialism.”<sup>4</sup>

During the Thaw and even beyond, Mikoyan actively promoted this hybrid identity to Soviet Armenian audiences, with the aim of bringing them “into the revolution” and to “secure their active involvement in the great socialist experiment” in the words of historian Francine Hirsch.<sup>5</sup> He drew upon the lived experiences of the Armenians during the traumatic period of the 1915 Armenian Genocide and the 1918-20 Armenian Republic. He specifically singled out the foreign policy orientation of the 1918-20 Republic towards the West, as determined by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, or the Dashnaks). Mikoyan contended that this policy did not produce the peace and security that the Armenian people needed, and he contrasted it with the security and material benefits that were associated with Russian and Soviet states. He also stressed the benefits of the mutual cultural enrichment derived from the interaction between the Russian and Armenian

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<sup>4</sup> For a definition of the idea of “Apricot Socialism,” see the introduction of this dissertation. For further information, see Maïke Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism: The National Past, the Soviet Project, and the Imagining of Community in Late Soviet Armenia,” *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 9-31.

<sup>5</sup> Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 5.

peoples and revolutionary movements. However, although Mikoyan invoked such narratives, he did not actively seek to revise or re-write Soviet history himself, something for which he had criticized Stalin at the XX Party Congress.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, inspired by the increased freedoms in Soviet historical sciences during the Thaw, Soviet Armenian historians sought out his counsel as an eyewitness to the events of the Civil War era in the Caucasus.<sup>7</sup> Although Mikoyan consented to answering their questions during his 1962 visit to Armenia, he consistently insisted that only they, as professional historians, could do the work of critical historical scholarship.

The narratives that Mikoyan invoked also served to bolster the policy known as the *druzhiba narodov* (“friendship of peoples”), which sought to promote harmonious coexistence and peaceful relations among different national and ethnic groups to maintain the unity of the Soviet state. The idea of the *druzhiba narodov* had actually been introduced by Stalin in 1935 to emphasize a sense of identification among the USSR’s various national groups to the Soviet state.<sup>8</sup> It succeeded the earlier NEP-era concept of the *bratsvo narodov* (“brotherhood of peoples”), which although stressing “proletarian unity,” only played a “minor role in state efforts to promote Soviet [i.e., state] unity.”<sup>9</sup> By the end of the 1930s,

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<sup>6</sup> David Brandenberger and Mikhail Zelenov, eds. *Stalin’s Master Narrative: A Critical Edition of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 34.

<sup>7</sup> For a good overview on Soviet historical sciences during the Thaw, see Roger D. Markwick, “Thaws and freezes in Soviet historiography, 1953–64,” in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era*, ed. Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 173-192, and Roger D. Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia: The Politics of Revisionist Historiography 1956–1974* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> For the historical background of the *druzhiba narodov* concept and its NEP-era predecessor *bratsvo narodov*, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 432-461. For an earlier work on this concept in Soviet historical writing, see Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969). Chapter 18 in that study deals with the post-Stalin trend among Soviet historians to stress cooperation and coexistence among various Soviet nationalities.

<sup>9</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 432-433.



Stalin's *druzhba narodov* concept had evolved into an "officially state sanctioned metaphor of an imagined multinational community."<sup>10</sup> In his use of the term during the Thaw, Mikoyan employed the *druzhba narodov* more in the way that Josip Broz Tito employed the concept of "brotherhood and unity" in Yugoslavia, i.e., as a means of promoting coexistence and peaceful relations among the various national groups of the state.<sup>11</sup>

In a similar way, Mikoyan sought to emphasize the necessity of coexistence to the peoples of the Caucasus in a time of rising nationalist sentiment. From his experience of the civil war in the Caucasus, Mikoyan knew well the explosive potential of ethnic strife between different national groups, especially between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. He even regarded it as a question of national security, stressing that opponents of the Soviet government utilized "any, even the most trivial, facts that may be interpreted as national injustice" against the state.<sup>12</sup> It was not without reason that Mikoyan, while on a visit to the frontier town of Firiuzia in Turkmenistan in January 1957, wrote that the concept of the *druzhba narodov* "serves as the basis for the invincibility of the Soviet system."<sup>13</sup> In this regard, Mikoyan also drew on the story of the 26 Baku commissars to foster the idea of the *druzhba narodov* among the various Soviet nationalities. Stepan Shahumyan, Ivan Fioletov, Mashadi Azizbekov, and Alesha Japaridze were not only men who Mikoyan deeply admired and revered, but also men who he cast as symbols of self-sacrificing revolutionaries who eschewed national differences in favor of pursuing common revolutionary aims. Therefore, the narratives that he espoused stressing coexistence among

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>11</sup> Fitzroy Maclean, *The Heretic: The Life and Times of Josip Broz-Tito* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 414-415.

<sup>12</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *USSR: A United Family of Nations*, trans. David Skvirsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 32-33.

<sup>13</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1288, l. 13. Mikoyan wrote the inscription in a visitor's book kept at the Firiuzia border post while inspecting Soviet troops guarding the frontier with Iran.

different nationalities also emphasized the hybrid “Soviet” and “national” identity as well. Mikoyan’s efforts to invoke the commissars also had relevance beyond the nationality issue. They alluded to the contemporary Thaw-era political struggle over de-Stalinization. In his meeting with rehabilitated Old Bolsheviks in Baku in March 1964, Mikoyan stressed a shared kinship between victims of Stalinism and the 26 Baku commissars, framing both groups as victims of “anti-revolutionary” tyranny.

This chapter explores Mikoyan’s use of historical narratives through these two foci of Armenia and the 26 Baku commissars. It argues that the uses of historical narratives in the service of the Soviet state constituted one possible response on the part of Moscow to the rising demands for greater national expression of the 1950s. Such responses again highlight the basic contours of the Thaw-era Soviet nationality policy that Mikoyan played a key role in articulating and developing, stressing state unity and integrity while embracing cultural diversity.

## **Narratives of Armenia**

During the Thaw and even after his retirement in 1965, Mikoyan actively promoted a hybrid “national” (“Armenian”) and “Soviet” identity among Soviet Armenians by emphasizing historical narratives that combined Armenian national concerns with socialist ideology and anti-imperialism. In promoting this hybrid identity, Mikoyan focused on the revolutionary continuity between Soviet Armenia and the 19th century Armenian revolutionary movement in the Caucasus. This link reflected the larger Soviet narrative emphasizing continuity between the Bolsheviks and the 19th century Russian revolutionary movement. The narratives that he invoked also underscored the failure of the Dashnaks to

provide material benefits to the Armenian people in the short-lived Armenian Republic of 1918-19 and targeted their “naïve” dependence on their British and American “imperialist” allies. Mikoyan’s writings, both public and private, also reveal that he strongly believed that Russia was crucial to the survival of the Armenian people, especially in the aftermath of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Therefore, the narratives of Armenian history that he stressed emphasized the importance of relations with Russia as a guarantor for Armenian security, material well-being, and national survival.

Mikoyan began to emphasize such historical narratives during the period of his March 1954 speech in Yerevan. In notes that he prepared for his speech, he stressed the significance of the “unification of Armenia with Russia” as “a turning point in the fate of the Armenian people.”<sup>14</sup> “During their long period under the yoke of the Turkish Sultan and the Iranian Shah,” Mikoyan wrote, “the Armenian people were not only deprived of their independence and statehood, and were not only subjected to barbaric feudal-serf exploitation and extortions, but also faced the threat of final physical annihilation.” Referring to the Armenian Genocide of 1915, Mikoyan wrote that “the tragic fate of the Western Armenians, who remained under the yoke of the Sultan of Turkey, unequivocally showed what awaited the Armenian people if Armenia did not unite with Russia.”<sup>15</sup> Mikoyan framed Armenia’s situation as a historical choice:

[The choice was] either to be completely physically annihilated [by Turkey], or to join Russia, be drawn into a higher order of economic development than feudalism, to experience the beneficial influence of advanced Russian culture, to go forever together with the Russian people, to fight together with them against foreign invaders, against tsarism, and against capitalism under the leadership of the Russian working class, on the path of socialist revolution, Armenian statehood, and

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<sup>14</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 327.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Armenian social and national renewal. That is how history posed the question to the Armenian people.<sup>16</sup>

Although Mikoyan never included this text in his final speech, it would have had a strong emotional appeal among Armenians if he did. The 1915 Genocide, which claimed the lives of 1.5 million people, fundamentally shaped the way Armenians conceived their past and present.<sup>17</sup> As historian Razmik Panossian wrote, the genocide is “the cornerstone of modern Armenian identity” and a “defining moment, which on the one hand acts as a fundamental break with the past and the historic homeland, while on the other serves as a prism through which national identity is seen, politics interpreted, and culture redefined.”<sup>18</sup>

In his draft notes, Mikoyan also emphasized that “for the Armenian people, joining Russia was not a ‘lesser evil.’ The unification of Armenia with Russia was the greatest progressive historical act, responding to the fundamental hopes and aspirations of the Armenian people and its working masses.”<sup>19</sup> He framed this act of unification within the broader trajectory of a dialectical Marxian view of history. In his view, the path for Eastern Armenia’s unification with Russia was laid by “an entire course of earlier developments in economic and cultural ties between Russia and Armenia.” In his 1954 notes, Mikoyan also wrote that “ordinary Armenian people, like the Georgians and the Azerbaijanis,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> For the most comprehensive history of the Genocide, see Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011). Several first-hand accounts and primary materials have also been published by the Gomidas Institute in London, including A-Do, *Van 1915: The Great Events of Vasbouragan*, trans. Ara Sarafian (London: Gomidas Institute, 2017), James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon by Viscount Bryce*, ed. Ara Sarafian, 2nd ed. (London: Gomidas Institute, 2005), Henry Morgenthau, Sr., *United States Diplomacy on the Bosphorous: The Diaries of Ambassador Morgenthau, 1913-1916*, ed. Ara Sarafian, (London: Gomidas Institute, 2004), Ara Sarafian, ed. *Talaat Pasha’s Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1917* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2011), and Ara Sarafian, ed., *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917* (London and Princeton: Gomidas Institute, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 228.

<sup>19</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 327.

enthusiastically greeted the Russian army [when they entered the Caucasus] and provided it with all possible assistance.” He stated that the Eastern Armenian “possessing classes” and “above all the bourgeoisie” were also positively predisposed toward the Russian orientation due to the fact that “unification with Russia opened up more favorable prospects for economic development and enrichment for them.”<sup>20</sup> However, Mikoyan also strongly criticized the “cruel colonialist policy of tsarism,” in reference to the Russification policies pursued by Alexander III toward Armenians.<sup>21</sup> He was likewise critical of the Eastern Armenian “possessing classes” in their attempt to use Russian tsarism to “pursue narrow selfish class interests” and to “intensify the exploitation of the working Armenians.”<sup>22</sup>

However, in the final analysis, Mikoyan emphasized that unification of Eastern Armenia with Russia was overall beneficial for the Armenian people. In his notes for his 1954 speech, Mikoyan even quoted from Khachatur Abovyan’s novel *Wounds of Armenia*, to emphasize this point.<sup>23</sup> Abovyan’s words, wrote Mikoyan, “reflect a deep historical truth. From those days [early 19th century] onward, the fate of the Armenian people was forever linked to the fate of the Russian people. The closeness to the Russian people, the beneficial influence of Russian culture on the culture of the Armenian people, the joint

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 326. For a good overview of the relationship between the Armenians and the tsarist state, including the impact of, and response to, Russification, see Stephen Badalyan Riegg, *Russia’s Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 326.

<sup>23</sup> The quotes that Mikoyan used include “The valiant spirit of the Russians saved us” and “The power of Russian philanthropy... softened these very rocks – the desolate, lifeless fields of Armenia settled by its people, who are now restoring their sacred country again under the care of the Russian nation.” (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 325). For the best edition of the Abovyan novel, with an English translation of the preface, see Khachatur Abovyan, *Verk Hayastani, Voghb Hayrenasiri* [Wounds of Armenia, Lamentation of a Patriot], ed. Gurgen Gasparyan and Pion Hakobyan (Yerevan: Charents Museum of Literature and Arts Publishing, 2004). For a good biographical sketch of Abovyan, see Agop J. Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, and Nourhan Ouzounian, eds. *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III: From The Eighteenth Century To Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 211-214.

struggle with the Russian workers against tsarism, and the communication with progressive, revolutionary representatives of the Russian nation raised the material and spiritual culture of the Armenian people.”<sup>24</sup> He added that “the Russian working class and the Bolshevik Party saved the Armenian people from imminent threat” and that “the victory of socialism turned Armenia into a flourishing republic on the doorstep of the East.”<sup>25</sup>

In his memoirs, Mikoyan echoed the same sentiments, but he was even more explicit in his discussions of the events of 1915, openly using the term “genocide” (“*genotsid*”) to describe them.<sup>26</sup> For centuries, he wrote that “the wealth of material and spiritual culture accumulated by the Armenian people had been destroyed and plundered by foreign invaders.” Many were “forced to flee from their homes to foreign lands” while others “died in an unequal battle with the invaders.” He added that “hundreds of thousands of Armenians were subjected to direct physical extermination more than once” culminating in the “unprecedented genocide by Turkey in April 1915.”<sup>27</sup> He continued:

Every decent Armenian understands that an inextricable link with Russia is a guarantee for the physical existence of the Armenian people and the preservation of their national statehood. And it is no accident that during the Civil War, when Armenia was cut off from Soviet Russia, many Armenians fought selflessly in the ranks of the Red Army. The Soviet Republic, having gone through the most difficult trials, survived. That was the main result of the path traveled. This path did not merely represent another respite, but a whole historical period of peaceful development [for the Armenian people].<sup>28</sup>

In this context, as in his 1954 notes, Mikoyan again framed Armenia’s union with Soviet Russia as an existential question on the fate of the Armenian people. In his view, it was

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<sup>24</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 325.

<sup>25</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 324.

<sup>26</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o Minuvshem* [So It Was: Reflections on the Past] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2014), 195.

<sup>27</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 194-195.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

the best possible outcome for the existence of an Armenian state. At that moment, he argued, Armenia “decided on a question of life or death.”<sup>29</sup>

Mikoyan also emphasized the connections that existed between the 19th century Armenian national movement and the radical Russian revolutionary movement of the same period.<sup>30</sup> In his notes for the 1954 speech, Mikoyan emphasized that “after joining Russia, the Armenian people immediately experienced all the beneficial influences of the great Russian culture.” Such influence included exposure to “the revolutionary-democratic thought of Russia,” which he noted “gave proper direction for Armenian social thought and contributed to its development.”<sup>31</sup> He stressed that it was “under the beneficial influence of Russian culture,” that the “ideas of Belinskii, Herzen, Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov sprouted from the great sons of the mass of the Armenian people – the educator-democrat Khachatur Abovyan and the revolutionary democrat Mikael Nalbandyan.”<sup>32</sup> He added:

It was they who proclaimed the revolutionary democratic direction in the framework of the Armenian reality. During this period, the revolutionary democratic movement, headed by Nalbandyan, connected liberation [of the Armenian people] with the revolutionary democratic movement in Russia and struggled for the victory of the peasant revolution. It was most logical in that era to form, with the support of the Armenian masses, an alliance with Russia’s revolutionary democratic circles who were devoted entirely to the Russian people.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> For a good historical overview of the 19th century Armenian revolutionary movement, see Anaide Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)*, trans. A.M. Berrett (Cambridge, MA: The Zoryan Institute, 2000). See also Panossian, *The Armenians*, 200-228, and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Populism, Nationalism, and Marxism among Russia’s Armenians” and “Labor and Socialism among Armenians in Transcaucasia,” in *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 63-78 and 79-93. For a related study on the Georgians, see Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 323.

<sup>32</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 323. For a good biographical sketch of Nalbandyan, see Hacikyan, Basmajian, Franchuk, and Ouzounian, *The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. III*, 291-294.

<sup>33</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 323.

In this way, Mikoyan was able to tie together the aims of the Russian revolutionary movement – and eventually the Bolsheviks – with the aims of major Armenian national figures from the era. This narrative is reflected in his March 1954 Yerevan speech when he underscored the fact that Raffi “devoted his first work with admiration to Mikael Nalbandyan, an associate of Chernyshevskii,” referring to the revolutionary Russian author of the 1863 novel *What is To Be Done?*.<sup>34</sup>

In his assessments of Armenian history, Mikoyan was, perhaps unsurprisingly, very critical of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, also known as the Dashnaktsutyun or the Dashnaks), an Armenian socialist-nationalist party that governed the short-lived independent Armenian Republic in the Caucasus from 1918 to 1920.<sup>35</sup> These criticisms of the Dashnaks served to demonstrate to Soviet Armenians (1) the folly and even danger of relying on the Western powers to protect Armenia, and (2) the demonstrated benefits of Soviet rule compared to the poverty, misery and instability of the Civil War years, as well as the failure of the Dashnak leadership to provide socioeconomic material benefits to the population. These narratives not only legitimized Soviet authority in Armenia, but even popularized it. The bitter memory of the poverty, violence, and chaos of the 1915 Genocide and the Civil War years was a unique experience to the Armenian people and it resonated strongly among the population, as did the perception of Western betrayal.<sup>36</sup> To many Soviet Armenians, the successes of Soviet Armenia therefore came to

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<sup>34</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga goroda Erevana, 11 mart 1954 goda* [Speech at the Voter Meeting of the Yerevan-Stalin Electoral Okrug of Yerevan, 11 March 1954] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1954), 43. Mikoyan was not alone in highlighting the connection between Chernyshevskii and Nalbandyan. In his book, Tillett reflects on the effort of Soviet historians from the republics to link Russian revolutionary figures to non-Russian national revolutionaries (see *The Great Friendship*, 387-392).

<sup>35</sup> For a good overview of the Dashnaks, see Panossian, *The Armenians*, 205-210.

<sup>36</sup> Panossian, *The Armenians*, 245-247.



represent not only successes of the Soviet state and the revolutionary vision of the Bolsheviks, but also of Armenian survival.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, those successes became instrumental in promoting the hybrid Soviet Armenian identity among the population by Mikoyan and Soviet Armenian authorities.<sup>38</sup>

Mikoyan's sentiments about the Dashnaks were informed, not only by ideological disagreements, but also by his personal history with them, dating back to his youth at the Nersesian School in Tiflis. At school, Mikoyan was a radical student leader who encouraged rebellious political activity against faculty and staff who were sympathetic to the Dashnaks. "The youth were largely against the teachers since many of the teachers were Dashnaks," recalled Mikoyan retrospectively in a private March 1958 meeting with his former Nersesian classmates in Yerevan. "Well, if everyone were communists, then we would be confused," he added to laughter from the audience. "The fact that some teachers were Dashnaks helped us," Mikoyan noted. "We had a desire to act... We wanted to fight."<sup>39</sup> Accounts from former classmates reflected on Mikoyan's position as a charismatic organizer who had the ability to captivate others with his ideas. One classmate credited him with "lighting the revolutionary fire" in the classroom.<sup>40</sup> In his memoirs, Mikoyan also recounted his later experience of personal "betrayal" by the Dashnaks during the period of

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<sup>37</sup> Lehmann, "Apricot Socialism," 11.

<sup>38</sup> Maïke Lehmann dissects these ideas in her study "Apricot Socialism".

<sup>39</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1343, l. 16.

<sup>40</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1343, l. 5. Another classmate recalled a meeting at the Tiflis City Duma in which a young Mikoyan was to speak, but the son of a prominent Dashnak attempted to prevent him from doing so. His fellow comrades in the class chased the provocateur away. The classmate recalled another saying to him that "since the Dashnaks behave so arrogantly and defiantly, they will not be able to do anything. They think that they are the saviors of the [Armenian] nation" (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1343, l. 7). The statement on the Dashnaks "not being able to do anything" is reminiscent of the title of the 1923 report of Dashnak leader Hovhannes Kajaznuni (the first Prime Minister of the 1918-20 Armenian Republic) entitled *Dashnaksutyun Has Nothing More to Do (Dashnaksutyune anelik chuni aylevs)*, which called for Dashnak recognition of Soviet Armenia.

the Baku Commune, accusing Dashnak leader Hamazasp Srvandztyan of surrendering the front to the Turks during the Ottoman invasion of Transcaucasia.<sup>41</sup>

There was no love lost on the part of the Dashnaks toward Mikoyan either.<sup>42</sup> In his account of the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920, the First Armenian Republic's last Prime Minister, Simon Vratsyan, accused Mikoyan and other Armenian Bolsheviks of "betraying" Armenia to Moscow.<sup>43</sup> In 1929, a correspondent in Vienna for the Paris-based Dashnak newspaper *Droshak* dismissed Mikoyan as "clearly a nothing" who was promoted within the Soviet leadership "only by being faithful to Stalin." He added that it would be "naïve to attribute any national identity to him" and that "he is as much Armenian as he is Chinese."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, in an inverse of Dashnak narratives that framed Mikoyan and the Armenian Bolsheviks as "traitors" against Armenia in the service of Soviet Russia, Mikoyan framed the Dashnaks as "traitors" against Armenia in the service of the West.

In his March 1954 speech in Yerevan, Mikoyan made only passing mention of the Dashnaks, in the context of general condemnations of all the ruling parties of the Civil War-era Caucasus republics (i.e., "the struggle against the Musavat-Dashnak-Menshevik counter-revolution").<sup>45</sup> However, in his notes in preparation for the speech, Mikoyan devoted significantly more attention to their activities, describing their "treachery" in harsh

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<sup>41</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 75-79.

<sup>42</sup> Although the Dashnaks held a hostile attitude towards Mikoyan, there were also groups within the Armenian Diaspora who admired him as an Armenian success story in the Soviet context. The Armenian Social Democrats (Hunchaks) were especially favorably disposed toward Mikoyan and were aware of his activities on Armenia's behalf. In an interview with the Beirut-based Armenian literary periodical *Ahken* in 1968, the leader of the Hunchaks, Harutiun Kuzhuni (Cherechian) said "If the Georgians had Stalin and Beria for years, then we also had Mikoyan for years, and we still have him today." (Grigor Shahinian, "Sotsial Demokrat Hunchakean Kusaktsutiune yev Hay Date [Social Democratic Hunchakian Party and the Armenian Cause]", *Ahekan* 68, no. 3-4 (1968): 94-104.)

<sup>43</sup> Simon Vratzian (Vratsyan), "How Armenia was Sovietized, Part III," trans. James G. Mandalian, *The Armenian Review* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1948): 70.

<sup>44</sup> "Mi zroyts pataskhanatu bolshevikiki het [A Conversation with a Responsible Bolshevik]", *Droshak* 12, no. 295 (December 1929): 284-285.

<sup>45</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech' na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel'nogo okruga*, 41.

terms, stressing that they had “earned itself the deep contempt of the Armenian people” for their reliance on Western powers. He even went so far as to call them “the executioners of the Armenian people in their attempt to tear Armenia away from Russia and to expose the Armenian nation to extermination by Turkey.”<sup>46</sup> Mikoyan heavily edited these passages with blue pencil, before deciding to remove them entirely.<sup>47</sup> However, they reflected themes that would emerge in speeches that Mikoyan delivered in later years. For instance, he echoed these sentiments in his June 1970 speech in Yerevan, on the eve of the commemoration of the anniversary of Armenia’s Sovietization. “Having undergone many difficult trials and tribulations,” Mikoyan said, “the Armenian people were brought to impoverishment, ruin, and hunger, and to the verge of death, by the Dashnak government. The Dashnaks, having tied the fate of the Armenian nation to the chariot of Anglo-American imperialism, relying on its help and deceiving the people, turned their back on Soviet Russia, the only force that could – and eventually later did – save Armenia.”<sup>48</sup>

Mikoyan contrasted his harsh criticism of the Dashnaks with praise for the successes achieved in Soviet Armenia, underscoring these as achievements of the Armenian people, and not only those of the Soviet government or the Communist Party. He expressed such sentiments in his June 1970 Yerevan speech:

During its half-century of existence, Soviet Armenia has achieved astonishingly great successes, especially if you keep in mind the terrible situation in which the Soviet government found Armenia and the Armenian people. Poor, destitute Armenia has become industrialized, and public education is at a high stage of development. The pride of the republic is its working class, its leading force, and the *kolkhoz* peasantry, its loyal ally. And there is a large detachment of socialist intelligentsia – scientists, engineers and technicians, agronomists, doctors, teachers,

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<sup>46</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 324.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 8.

writers, and artists who make a great contribution to the high rates of development of the republic's economy and culture.<sup>49</sup>

As expected, in the same speech, Mikoyan acknowledged the role of the Soviet government “headed by Lenin” in providing “generous military, political, and economic assistance” to Armenia, and that this aid “opened a new era in the history of the Armenian people” as well as “close ties and friendship with the Russian people, neighboring peoples, and all peoples of the Soviet Union.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, in his 1958 meeting with his Nersesian classmates, Mikoyan stressed the major changes that occurred in Armenia since 1920, noting that “all peoples of our country are pleased by the great successes of Armenia.”<sup>51</sup>

Although Mikoyan frequently invoked historical narratives, he was not involved in the process of writing Soviet Armenian history, a matter that he left to the republic's professional historians. In fact, in the process of writing his memoirs, Mikoyan consulted with these historians about those historical episodes of the Sovietization of the Caucasus that he did not personally witness. For example, in 1967, he met in Moscow with Armenian scholar Ashot Hovannisyan, who told him about an unpublished manuscript on events in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1917-1920 written by an Armenian historian, H. Tunyan, in Yerevan.<sup>52</sup> Mikoyan became intrigued and Hovannisyan promised to send the text to him directly. At the end of November 1967, he sent the full 330-page Armenian-language manuscript to Mikoyan, along with a detailed map of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' and testimonies from Azerbaijan's first Prime Minister, Fatali Khan Khoiskii, from

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<sup>49</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 12.

<sup>50</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 9.

<sup>51</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1343, l. 17.

<sup>52</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 81, ll. 1-3. Significantly, the manuscript covers the events in Nagorno-Karabakh from 1917 to 1920 without addressing the subsequent process by which the Bolsheviks decided to formalize the territory as an autonomous region within Soviet Azerbaijan.

the Armenian Archives.<sup>53</sup> In an accompanying letter, Hovannisyan noted that Tunyan's historical overview "will give you the opportunity to refresh in your memory on the forgotten course of events in those years as you write your memoirs."<sup>54</sup> In the end, Mikoyan drew on the manuscript to help guide the writing of his memoirs on the events in Karabakh in those years, including the Shushi pogrom of March 1920.<sup>55</sup>

Although Mikoyan never offered unsolicited input on the writing of Armenian history, there was one instance when he contemplated it. In his draft notes for his 1954 speech, he originally sought to take Armenian officials to task for supporting "fictitious" historical narratives about the Armenian revolutionary movement. Specifically, Mikoyan planned to criticize them for not only obscuring the links between Raffi and Russian revolutionary writers like Chernyshevskii, but also for supporting narratives that demonstrated a "second link" of the Armenian revolutionary movement to the "Western European bourgeoisie."<sup>56</sup> Although Mikoyan ultimately decided against including this text in his 1954 speech, it nevertheless offers a rare glimpse at his continued interest and engagement in Soviet Armenian historiographical discussions.

Even though Mikoyan refused to participate in the writing of Armenian history, he was nevertheless sought out by Soviet Armenian historians who wanted to clarify important historical questions on various Armenian issues. Mikoyan's position as a participant and eyewitness of the civil war in the Caucasus, and his very public attack on

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<sup>53</sup> For Hovhannisyan's letter in Armenian and Russian, as well as Tunyan's full manuscript and the map of Nagorno-Karabakh, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 81, ll. 1-331.

<sup>54</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 81, ll. 1-3. Hovannisyan also noted that the final part of the manuscript on the circumstances surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh's Sovietization "merited special attention."

<sup>55</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 171. Significantly, Mikoyan's mention of the Shushi pogrom does not appear in the Russian or Armenian editions of his memoirs published in the Soviet Union during his lifetime. See for example A. I. Mikoyan, *Dorogoy bor'by* [The Good Fight] (Moscow: Politicheskoi Literatury, 1971), 564, and A. I. Mikoyan, *Paykari ughiov* [The Good Fight] (Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakchutyun, 1971), 724.

<sup>56</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, ll. 324-325.

Stalin's *Short Course* at the XX Party Congress lent him credibility and authority among Armenian scholars.<sup>57</sup> The desire on the part of professional Armenian historians to seek Mikoyan's input on major historical questions also came amid monumental shifts occurring within Soviet historical sciences generally, due to Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the XX Party Congress. Under Stalin, the science of history had been "reduced to little more than a 'handmaiden' to party policy."<sup>58</sup> The advent of de-Stalinization served to "embolden professional historians to critique historical writing" and led to the rise of the revisionist Soviet historians, who rejected Stalinist approaches to history.<sup>59</sup> Soviet Armenian historians were no exception to these larger trends and they sought Mikoyan's counsel as they explored sensitive questions, such as Stalin's Purges or the Bolshevik collaboration with the forces of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (the Kemalists) of Turkey.

During his March 1962 visit to Armenia, Mikoyan consented to meet with historians from the Armenian branch of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism at their request at the Armenian Central Committee building in Yerevan. The timing of the visit was significant – only a few months after the XXII Party Congress of October 1961, which gave a fresh impetus to both de-Stalinization and Soviet historical revisionism.<sup>60</sup> Mikoyan's discussion with the historians commenced immediately after his hour-long meeting with a delegation of Armenian writers, including the recently rehabilitated Vagharshak Norents.<sup>61</sup> The historians sought Mikoyan's input on a number of historiographical questions for the writing of *Sketches of the History of the Communist*

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<sup>57</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 42.

<sup>58</sup> Markwick, "Thaws and freezes in Soviet historiography," 174.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 173-177.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>61</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 8.

*Party in Armenia*. The meeting was attended by very prominent Armenian figures, including Armenian First Secretary Yakov Zarobyan, and the discussion was guided by eminent Soviet Armenian historian Tsatur Aghayan, the head of the Armenian branch of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>62</sup> Mikoyan's son Sergo was also present.<sup>63</sup>

The first question that Aghayan posed to Mikoyan concerned the proper Soviet historical interpretation of the Armenian volunteer movement of World War I. He noted that some Armenian historians characterized Armenian volunteers as “patriots” who “set the task of going to help the Armenian people oppressed under the yoke of Turkey.” This group characterized them as a “national liberation movement” representing a “progressive phenomenon in the history of the liberation struggle of the Armenian people.” He contrasted this view with that of other Armenian historians who argued “that this movement contributed to the implementation of the predatory plans of the tsarist autocracy, and that the Turks used this moment to destroy the Armenian people.”<sup>64</sup>

The response that Mikoyan gave to Aghayan extended logically from his 1954 writings. However, that would have been surprising to a younger Mikoyan in 1919. During World War I, Mikoyan volunteered to fight against Ottoman forces as part of the First Armenian battalion commanded by General Andranik Torosi Ozanyan.<sup>65</sup> At that time, his political ideas, like those of other Armenians of his generation, constituted a mix of socialism and Armenian nationalism. He saw the war over Ottoman Armenia as a war of national liberation. However, after becoming a Bolshevik, Mikoyan embraced internationalism and renounced his earlier nationalist views on Western Armenia. Years

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<sup>62</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 1.

<sup>63</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 122.

<sup>64</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 1.

<sup>65</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 39.

later, Sergo Mikoyan noted that his father had become “blinded [to internationalism] by the role of ‘proletarian Baku’ in the revolution.”<sup>66</sup> In a December 1919 letter to Lenin, Mikoyan recommended that the Bolshevik Party renounce its claims to Ottoman Armenia, given the fact that the former Western Armenian homeland had become majority Muslim Kurdish and Turkish as a result of the 1915 Genocide.<sup>67</sup> Mikoyan strongly condemned the Turkish government for “tirelessly pursuing a policy of physical annihilation and total destruction of the Armenians on the territory of Turkish Armenia, subjecting fire and sword to over a million people.”<sup>68</sup> However, he condemned in equally strong terms the idea of annexing Ottoman Armenia, which he claimed was a “reactionary chimera” that reflected the “chauvinist” designs of the Dashnaks, supported by Western “imperialists,” and that threatened to alienate the “Muslim masses” against the Bolsheviks.<sup>69</sup> He conceded that the Russo-Turkish theatre of World War I represented an objectively revolutionary “national liberation struggle” in favor of the Western Armenians. However, even here he was equivocal, despite the fact that he himself had served on that front under the command of General Andranik only a few years earlier.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, by the time of his March 1954 speech, Mikoyan’s views on these issues had changed. In his meeting with Armenian historians in Yerevan, he criticized his own youthful naïveté and “national nihilism,” which he deemed insensitive toward

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<sup>66</sup> Sergo Mikoyan, “Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn’, otdannaia narodu [Anastas Mikoyan – A Life Devoted to the People]” (unpublished manuscript, Autumn 2009), typescript, 32.

<sup>67</sup> For Mikoyan’s full December 1919 report to Lenin, see Iuri Barsegov, ed. *Genotsid armian – Otvetstvennost’ Turtsii i obiazatel’sтва mirovogo soobshchestva: Dokumenty i kommentarii, Tom 2, Chast’ 1, The Genocide of the Armenians: The Responsibility of Turkey and the Obligations of the World Community, Documents and Commentary, Vol. 2, Part 1* (Moscow: Gardariki, 2003), 36-39.

<sup>68</sup> Barsegov, *Genotsid armian*, 37.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>70</sup> In his letter, Mikoyan wrote that the national liberation struggle of the Western Armenians could be interpreted as an objective revolutionary struggle, “albeit not entirely fairly.” See Barsegov, ed. *Genotsid armian*, 37.



Armenian national sentiments. Speaking of his attitude toward the nationality issue at the time of the civil war, Mikoyan told those present, “in this matter, we communists, myself included, have shown nihilism.”<sup>71</sup> By contrast, he underscored Shahumyan’s more inclusive approach toward national sensibilities, which emphasized the greater autonomy and self-governance for nationalities. However, at that time, Mikoyan noted that “Shahumyan remained in the minority” in his political positions, and that opposition to his approach, as articulated by Georgian Bolshevik Filipp Makharadze, was the dominant view. “This was a mistake,” Mikoyan said.<sup>72</sup> On the Bolshevik opposition to the formation of specific nationality-based branches of the Communist Party, Mikoyan also noted “I too thought it was nationalism. At the same time, we proceeded from the assumption that there would be no need for nation-states after the victory of Soviet power in Transcaucasia. Our understanding did not make it possible to use the form of national statehood for the success of the socialist revolution.”<sup>73</sup> Mikoyan would have seen such a frank admission of errors as being consistent with what he viewed as the Leninist principle of Party self-criticism, which he later referred to as “Lenin’s proven weapon of the Party to identify and eliminate shortcomings” in his June 1970 speech in Yerevan.<sup>74</sup>

At the 1962 Yerevan meeting, a contrite Mikoyan told Aghayan and the Armenian historians that although World War I was an imperialist war, the Caucasian Front and the Armenian struggle for Western Armenia did indeed constitute a war of national liberation

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<sup>71</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, ll. 5-6. For more historical background on the nationality debates within the Bolshevik Party involving Shahumyan, see Timothy K. Blauvelt, “Ideology meets practice in the struggle for the Transcaucasus: Stepan Shaumyan and the evolution of Bolshevik nationality policy,” in *The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic of 1918: Federal Aspirations, Geopolitics and National Projects*, ed. Adrian Brisku and Timothy K. Blauvelt (London: Routledge, 2021), 81-92.

<sup>74</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 10.

for the Armenians. “Of course, Russian tsarism wanted to use this movement [the Armenian volunteer movement] for its own interests” Mikoyan told Aghayan. “But,” he stressed, “that does not change its character. And, of course the nationalist parties also wanted to use this movement for their own reactionary ends. However, this movement was progressive.”<sup>75</sup> He proceeded to liken it to the Bulgarian volunteer movement and stressed its inclusion of workers and peasants. Even more importantly, Mikoyan maintained that “although the war of 1914-1918 was generally an imperialist war, the advance of the Russian army on the Turkish front objectively played a progressive role in the struggle of the Armenian people against the Turkish enslavers.”<sup>76</sup>

Another key issue on which the Soviet Armenian historians sought Mikoyan’s clarification was the founding date of the Communist Party of Armenia. In 1918, the poet and political leader Gurgun Haykuni founded an Armenian Communist Party with the aim of promoting the Bolshevik cause among Western Armenian refugees who had fled the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Armenia.<sup>77</sup> By contrast, Mikoyan argued that the Communist Party of Armenia that governed the Armenian SSR was descended not from the party established by Haykuni, but from the party established in 1920 on the eve of the Armenian Republic’s Sovietization. “However, there is no need to deny the positive role of the ‘Communist Party of Armenia’ headed by Comrade Haykuni,” Mikoyan said. “History must be written as it really was. We [Bolsheviks] assumed that Armenia [i.e., both Eastern

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<sup>75</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, ll. 1-2.

<sup>76</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, ll. 1-3.

<sup>77</sup> For more information on the 1918 Armenian Communist Party, see Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. I: The First Year, 1918-1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 408-415.

and Western Armenia] would be completely liberated and that this would play a big role for the entire international revolutionary movement.”<sup>78</sup>

The Armenian historians also inquired about the Armenian Bolshevik uprising of May 1920. Known as the May Uprising, this event constituted a popular Bolshevik revolt that swept up much of northern Armenia, with the town of Aleksandropol (today Gyumri, Armenia) serving as its revolutionary center.<sup>79</sup> The uprising was ultimately crushed by Armenia’s Dashnak government.<sup>80</sup> Reflecting his historical interpretation of the uprising, Mikoyan wrote in his memoirs that “although the May Uprising of the working people of Armenia ended in defeat, it laid the groundwork for the victorious uprising in November of the same year throughout Armenia.”<sup>81</sup> He made the same case in his meeting with the Armenian historians. Influenced by his focus on Cuban affairs, Mikoyan even likened the ill-fated May Uprising and the actions of the Armenian Bolsheviks to the ill-fated attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba led by Fidel Castro.<sup>82</sup> He argued that just as “history had absolved” Castro, so had history absolved the Armenian Bolsheviks:

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<sup>78</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 5.

<sup>79</sup> For a detailed overview of the May Uprising, see Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. III: From London to Sévres, February–August, 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 209-253. See also Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 219-220. After the uprising was violently crushed by the Dashnak government, rumors spread that Mikoyan had been among those executed, even though Mikoyan did not participate in the May Uprising and was not in Armenia at the time (see Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. III*, 252).

<sup>80</sup> Although the Dashnak government succeeded in suppressing the uprising, it faced a greater challenge in crushing the rebellion in the region of Tavush in northeast Armenia, adjoining Mikoyan’s native Lori. Tavush was a stronghold for the Armenian Bolsheviks, and in its forested mountains, local Armenian partisans fiercely resisted the Dashnaks (Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. III*, 244-247). After receiving appeals for support, Mikoyan sent a telegram to Sergo Ordzhonikidze, requesting assistance to the partisans. However, although Ordzhonikidze provided support for the rebels, it was already too late. The telegram is reproduced by Mikoyan in his memoirs (see A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 175-176).

<sup>81</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 176.

<sup>82</sup> On one of his visits to Cuba, Mikoyan even invoked his Armenian heritage to humorous effect. During negotiations, he became flustered by the intransigent Ernesto “Che” Guevara and jested that “the name ‘Che’ suited him, because ‘che’ means ‘no’ in Armenian.” In response, Guevara “laughed heartily.” Mikoyan recounted this story in his interview with Iosif Grigulevich, which was cited by Sergo Mikoyan in *Anatomiia Karibskogo Krizisa* [Anatomy of the Caribbean Crisis] (Moscow: Academia, 2006), 619.

Not every uprising has to immediately end in victory. If every rebel were to stop rebelling after defeat, then they would not be revolutionaries. This business is fraught with great difficulties. But is it really possible to blame the revolutionaries for the fact that the uprising did not end successfully? The May Uprising of 1920 in Armenia undoubtedly played a positive role. It was from these difficulties that the masses learned political struggle.<sup>83</sup>

Mikoyan added that “proper decisions are drawn up in the course of the revolutionary struggle.” He cited the example that “in Cuba, some communists did not support Fidel Castro at the beginning. And now the Cuban communists recognize Fidel Castro as their god. This man developed together with the people and entered Marxism-Leninism fighting.”<sup>84</sup> Mikoyan also articulated the reasons for the defeat of the May Uprising, including “the fact that the Russian army at that moment could not come to the rescue” and that “the Armenian Committee of the Bolshevik Party (Armenkom) was poorly organized and did not receive support.” He also stated that the uprising was “poorly prepared – just as the revolt began in one place, it ended in another.” However, Mikoyan’s overall verdict was that the “uprising was a heroic page in the history of the revolutionary struggle of the Armenian people and a great lesson.”<sup>85</sup>

Mikoyan’s discussion with Armenian historians also touched on sensitive subjects such as Stalin’s Purges, the mistakes of previous Soviet Armenian governments, and Bolshevik collaboration with Turkey’s Kemalists in 1920-21. Although more conservative Soviet officials might have balked at questions on such issues, Mikoyan addressed them openly and candidly, and even used the occasion to further criticize Stalin. In all cases, he

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<sup>83</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 8.

<sup>84</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, ll. 8-9.

<sup>85</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 8. Mikoyan reiterated that conclusion later in his June 1970 speech in Yerevan, stressing that the May Uprising was “a mass popular movement” that “spoke to the growth of the socialist revolution in Armenia, and to the continuation of the October Revolution on Armenian territory” (RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, ll. 8-9).

advised the historians to cover events “objectively” but “within a Marxist-Leninist framework.”<sup>86</sup> Aghayan posed the question on Kemalism frankly. “It is known that the Soviet government had a positive attitude toward the Kemalist movement and supported it in every possible way,” he said. However, he also pointed to the reality that “the Kemalists acted as ardent nationalists, enslaving and exterminating other peoples – Greeks, Armenians, etc.” Specifically, he cited the “great devastation and suffering” that they brought to the Armenian people, “including the seizure of Armenian territories and the destruction of the civilian population.” “How should we treat these facts?” he inquired.<sup>87</sup>

Mikoyan’s response was just as direct, a fact that was itself noteworthy, especially in the context of a discussion of the Bolshevik-Kemalist collaboration. The subject was a very sensitive one for Armenians during the Soviet era because the collaboration resulted in the loss of certain territories (Kars, Ardahan, Mount Ararat, and the ruined city of Ani) that had been part of Russian Armenia and that held major cultural and historical significance for the Armenian people.<sup>88</sup> The atrocities committed by the Kemalist forces against Armenian civilians only added to the sensitivity surrounding this issue for Soviet Armenians.<sup>89</sup> The fact that Mikoyan was so willing to address such a controversial subject

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<sup>86</sup> Mikoyan’s statement was based on Lenin’s position that Marxist theory represented “objective truth” as expressed in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1908).

<sup>87</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, ll. 9-10.

<sup>88</sup> For a detailed study of the Bolshevik-Kemalist collaboration and its implications for Armenia, see Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. IV: Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). The Russian SFSR ceded the areas in question to Kemalist Turkey at the close of the Russian Civil War in the treaties of Moscow and Kars in March and November 1921 respectively. While negotiating the latter, Moscow attempted to retain at least Ani and the salt-mining town of Kulp (near Mount Ararat) for the Soviet Armenian republic. According to Simon Vratsyan, Soviet negotiator Iakov Ganetskii argued for Ani’s “great historical and scientific value for the Armenians.” However, the Kemalist side refused to renegotiate the treaty. (Simon Vratzian (Vratsyan), “How Armenia Was Sovietized, (Part V),” trans. James G. Mandalian, *The Armenian Review* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1949): 123.)

<sup>89</sup> For more on atrocities committed by Kemalist forces, see Benny Morris and Dror Ze’evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey’s Destruction of its Christian Minorities, 1894–1924* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 293-380.

so openly with the historians was significant in the context of the broader thaw within Soviet historical sciences at that time, especially because the Bolshevik-Kemalist issue had the potential to throw into question the Party's reputation among Armenians.

In his response, Mikoyan addressed both the negative and positive aspects of the Kemalist movement and of the early Bolshevik support for it as an “anti-imperialist” movement from Asia that could inspire similar uprisings.<sup>90</sup> “We assumed that the other countries of the East would rise against the imperialists in a chain reaction,” Mikoyan said. “Inside the country, the Kemalists opposed the Sultanist [Ottoman] regime and the feudal order. In that sense, the Kemalist movement should be considered progressive.” However, he emphasized that this was only “one side of the phenomenon.” “The other side,” Mikoyan stressed, “was that the Kemalist movement was directed against small peoples... [and that] resulted in the Armenian people suffering significant casualties and losses of territory.” Mikoyan concluded that “this aggression was a manifestation of the reactionary tendency of the Kemalist movement.”<sup>91</sup> He advised the Armenian historians to approach the matter by highlighting these two sides of Kemalism. “When characterizing the Kemalist movement,” he told them, “it is necessary to stress its anti-imperialist character, but at the same time, it is impossible to not acknowledge its reactionary side – its aggressive actions towards other peoples.”<sup>92</sup> When one of the historians, Artashes Karinyan, responded by assessing Lenin's decision to collaborate with the Kemalists as “correct” given that it was “anti-imperialist,” Mikoyan pushed back, again stressing that both sides of the movement

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<sup>90</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, ll. 9-10.

<sup>91</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 10.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

had to be represented. “Historical facts and phenomena must be elucidated objectively, just as they took place in reality,” he said.<sup>93</sup>

For Armenian historians present at the meeting with Mikoyan, the process of de-Stalinization presented new issues that needed to be addressed, including the wholesale reinterpretation of historical figures and events. “In some cases,” Aghayan told Mikoyan, “the decisions of the plenums and congresses of the Armenian Communist Party during the period of the cult of personality contain erroneous characterizations of individual events.” As an example, he cited the efforts by the Armenian Party to associate the “shortcomings and the failure to fulfill industrial plans in Alaverdi” with the Shakhty Trial at the VI Armenian Party Congress in 1929.<sup>94</sup> He asked if such “mistakes” should be corrected in the *Sketches on the History of the Communist Party of Armenia*.<sup>95</sup> Mikoyan answered affirmatively, but once again advised the Armenian historians to cover all aspects of the history – both negative and positive.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, in his response Mikoyan also used the occasion to critique Stalin on collectivization, advising the historians to “cover leftist mistakes” on the issue. “At one time,” he told the historians, “Stalin pressed to immediately cover 100% of Armenia with *kolkhozes*. Because of this step, I remember that two villages of Armenians wanted to go to Turkey. These were extremes. It should be noted that

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<sup>93</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 11.

<sup>94</sup> The Shakhty Trial of Spring 1928 was the first important show trial held in the Soviet Union. For further information, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Journal of Contemporary History,” *Journal for Contemporary History* 9, no. 1 (January 1974): 33-52.

<sup>95</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 11.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Mikoyan specifically told the historians, “I think it is necessary. Criticism of admitted mistakes should have a place in the *Sketches on the History of the Communist Party of Armenia*. However, the Armenian Central Committee should discuss these questions, because they concern decisions of the congresses and plenums of the Central Committee. The shortcomings in the industrial production of Alaverdi, which were associated with the Shakhty Trial at the VI Armenian Party Congress, were certainly somewhat exaggerated. In general, you need to cover negative facts. History must be written objectively – just as it is.”

collectivization was often carried out without any clear preparation and often moved forward, and then everything had to be corrected.”<sup>97</sup>

In addition to his critiques of collectivization, Mikoyan went on to discuss the adverse impact of the Purges on the economic development and productivity of the Armenian Republic. “During the period of the cult of personality,” he said, “your growth and development slowed down, just as it did throughout the country, due to the fact that a significant part of the cadres was arrested in 1937-1938.” He also advised the historians to cover all of Soviet Armenia’s leaders “objectively,” in accordance with Marxism-Leninism. “In your *Sketches*,” he told them, “you should write about the leaders of the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee of Armenia, such as Kasyan, Ter-Gabrielyan, Myasnikyan, Hambardzumyan and others. History must know its people. There is no need to praise them. Just write as it was.”<sup>98</sup> Ashot Hovhannisyan inquired about Mikoyan’s opinion of Sarkis Lukashin, Hovhannisyan’s predecessor as Armenia’s First Secretary in 1921-22 and later a victim of the Purges. “You know that I had no special feeling for him,” Mikoyan said. “But what difference does that make? He was a good, knowledgeable worker and you should write about him.”

Mikoyan also advised those in attendance to write about Grigorii Arutinov, Armenia’s long-time party boss who was appointed in 1937 and later ousted by Moscow as First Secretary in 1953. This advice was significant, given the circumstances of Arutinov’s ouster from office.<sup>99</sup> “He was not a wrecker,” Mikoyan said. “After Stalin’s death, Beria wanted to remove him and put someone else in his place. But he didn’t have

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<sup>97</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 11.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Chapter 1 details the circumstances of Arutinov’s removal by Khrushchev.



time to do it.” He conceded Arutinov’s shortcomings as a leader, noting that he was “bureaucratic” and “haughty” and that he “did not study Armenian” and therefore “communicated little with the people” due to his poor knowledge of the language. Nevertheless, Mikoyan emphasized that Arutinov was an “intelligent man” and a “good organizer.” “After his death,” Mikoyan said, “Tovmasyan and Arushanyan demanded that he be expelled from the party. It was wrong. Here the Armenian vengefulness was felt, going from one extreme to another. If they beat a man, then they want to finish him off to the end.”<sup>100</sup> To these remarks, Zarobyan added, “Correct. Arutinov died as a member of the Party.”<sup>101</sup> Artashes Karinyan raised the issue of Arutinov’s mistakes. “That is correct,” responded Mikoyan. “You need to write about the errors too.”<sup>102</sup>

Mikoyan also called for an objective assessment of the recently ousted First Secretary Suren Tovmasyan. This advice was also significant, given that Tovmasyan had been one of the republican leaders ousted by Moscow due to his allegedly relaxed attitude toward “ideological flaws” and “nationalist tendencies” in Armenia.<sup>103</sup> However, Mikoyan took a more charitable view. “Comrade Tovmasyan should also not be mixed with dirt,” he said. “He did a lot of stupid things, which were intolerable. But you need to approach the issue objectively. He did not have sufficient political training, but he tried to do his best. It’s good that he was dismissed without any commotion.” Ultimately, though, Mikoyan stressed that it was up to the historians to examine the history judiciously in an

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<sup>100</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, ll. 12-13.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 13.

<sup>103</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 148, l. 43.

“objective Marxist way” and to “analyze negative and positive facts and draw the corresponding conclusions.”<sup>104</sup>

Notably, his 1962 Yerevan meeting was transcribed by the Armenian government and, after the discussion, it was sent to Mikoyan by the Armenian scholars for verification. However, Mikoyan again encouraged the historians to instead use his comments only as starting points for deeper historical investigations. “I understand them in the sense that they want ready-made answers from me on a number of the most pressing questions about the history of the Communist Party of Armenia,” Mikoyan wrote to Zarobyan in October 1962. Nevertheless, he added that it was “up to the comrades themselves” to examine these deep historical questions. “I cannot in any way replace them in this area,” he said. “It is easier for them than it is for me because I must use the data of my memory and it cannot always be a reliable source of judgment.” He added that “they [as historians] also have documents and other evidence, as well the necessary time to study and evaluate.” However, Mikoyan stressed “I do not exclude my participation when the book on the history of the Armenian Communist Party is finished if it is discussed in the Central Committee and my consultation is required.” He asked Zarobyan to convey his message to the historians.<sup>105</sup>

Still, even after this exchange, in subsequent years, Armenian historians continued to seek Mikoyan’s assistance in clarifying details on the history of the Revolution in the Caucasus and even in debunking widespread myths. To these matters, Mikoyan acquiesced, albeit with reservations. For instance, a popular belief among Armenians held that, in early 1918, Stepan Shahumyan traveled from Baku to Tiflis and back at his own

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<sup>104</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 13.

<sup>105</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1721, l. 15.

risk, “without proper protection and without the knowledge of the leading Party bodies.”<sup>106</sup> Armenian historians turned to Mikoyan for clarification on this matter, and he publicly refuted such assertions in a letter that was cited by the Armenian scholar K. A. Mamikonyan in an article entitled *A Page from the Chronicle of the Life of Stepan Shahumyan*. The latter was published in *Herald of the Armenian Archives* in time for the commemoration of Shahumyan’s 90th birthday in October 1968.<sup>107</sup>

Mikoyan often invoked history in his public speeches and writings on Armenia in order to promote the hybrid Soviet Armenian identity. However, when it came to the writing of history itself, Mikoyan always deferred to professional Soviet Armenian historians. As an eyewitness to major historical events, he was frequently sought out by Armenian historians to answer burning historical questions. He often engaged with them, most notably in his 1962 meeting with Soviet Armenian historians in Yerevan. However, although an eyewitness to, and later memoirist of, this history, he ultimately preferred to leave professional history to the professional historians.

### **In the Footsteps of the Commissars**

The story of the Baku Commune of 1918 played an essential role in Mikoyan’s promotion of the concept of the *druzhba narodov*. A significant episode in the history of the Russian Revolution, the commune was established by a group of Caucasian revolutionaries in Baku, which was then one of Imperial Russia’s leading industrial cities and home to an ethnically and religiously diverse population. Led by Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shahumyan (also

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<sup>106</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 397, l. 52ob.

<sup>107</sup> K. A. Mamikonyan, “Mi ej St. Shahumyani kyank’i taregut’yunits’ [A Page from the Chronicle of the Life of Stepan Shahumyan],” *Banber Hayastani Arkhivneri* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1968): 114-116.

known as the “Caucasian Lenin”), it pursued power democratically and nonviolently. Mikoyan, who looked to Shahumyan as a mentor, was one of the young revolutionaries involved in this ill-fated experiment, which lasted only between April and July 1918. After its fall, 26 of its leaders – the mostly Bolshevik 26 Baku commissars – met a tragic fate with their execution by the intervening British forces and their Socialist Revolutionary allies in the sands of Turkmenistan.<sup>108</sup>

The commissars hailed from a whole range of ethnic backgrounds – Armenian, Azeri, Georgian, Russian, and Jewish – but they all overlooked their national differences in the face of major goals or challenges, such as the aim to build a more egalitarian society, and the need to repel the British intervention in the region. Mikoyan first advanced this idea in his March 1954 address in Yerevan when he called on his listeners to “preserve and fully develop” the “wonderful traditions of internationalism” of the Baku Commissars and other Bolshevik revolutionaries from the Caucasus.<sup>109</sup> In the same speech, Mikoyan also proclaimed that the heroism of the 26 commissars would “never be eradicated from our memory.” “Alongside Stepan Shahumyan,” he said, “the Russian Ivan Fioletov, Georgian Alesha Japaridze, Azerbaijani Mashadi Azizbekov, Jewish Iakov Zevin and others also faced death.”<sup>110</sup> Mikoyan firmly believed that the security and success of the country was strongly contingent on the ethnic harmony within it. In his view, the Baku 26 provided an

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<sup>108</sup> For the classic account of the Baku Commune, see Ronald Grigor Suny’s *The Baku Commune, 1917-18: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

<sup>109</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga*, 44.

<sup>110</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, l. 49, and A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga goroda Erevana,” March 11, 1954, Yerevan, Audio recording, 121:48, HAA-KFFP. Significantly, in the original speech that Mikoyan read in Yerevan, Fioletov’s name came was the first mentioned by Mikoyan after Shahumyan. In the published version (A. I. Mikoyan, *Rech’ na sobranii izbiratelei Erevanskogo-Stalinskogo izbiratel’nogo okruga*, 41), the order was changed either by Mikoyan or the publisher, and Japaridze’s name came first after Shahumyan, with Fioletov’s name placed third.

example of unity across national lines in the pursuit of common aims in the service of the revolution and, ultimately, the Soviet state.

For Mikoyan as a participant of the Revolution in Baku, the memory of the Baku 26 was sacred. In 1980, American journalist Harrison Salisbury wrote that the execution of the 26 “never left Mikoyan.” When Mikoyan personally told the story of their demise to Salisbury, the details were so vivid that “it sounded as though it had occurred only yesterday, so fresh were the details in his memory, so keen his emotion.” For him, it was “the most dramatic episode of a life that was crowded with dramatic episodes.”<sup>111</sup> According to Salisbury, Mikoyan also had feelings of guilt about the fact that he had, by luck, survived and escaped the fate of his fallen comrades.<sup>112</sup> “By that simple accident,” recalled Salisbury, “Mikoyan escaped and [Shahumyan] did not. All his life Mikoyan was to wonder over this accident, feeling somehow at fault that he had lived while his beloved leader [Shahumyan] and his other comrades had died.”<sup>113</sup> As for Shahumyan, Mikoyan “never tired” of talking about him, “nor of singing his praises as a remarkable revolutionary leader.” As Salisbury also wrote, Mikoyan was “dedicated to [Shahumyan’s] family and children and in later years treated them as if they were his own.”<sup>114</sup>

However, Mikoyan’s commitment to preserving the memory of the commissars was not limited to his personal desire to keep their memory alive. By the mere fact of their multiethnic composition, Mikoyan saw the commissars as a microcosm of the USSR itself. Just as the Soviet Union was a vast multiethnic state whose peoples had to work together

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<sup>111</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, “Preface,” in *The Memoirs of Anastas Mikoyan, Vol. 1: The Path of Struggle*, ed. Sergo Mikoyan, trans. Katherine T. O’Connor and Diana L. Burgin (Madison, CT: Sphinx Press, 1988), xiii.

<sup>112</sup> For the story of Mikoyan’s survival, see Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 342-343.

<sup>113</sup> Salisbury, “Preface,” xiii.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

to “achieve communism,” so did the Baku Commune unite individuals across ethnic and national lines in the service of the revolution. The moral of the story was that, if different peoples can work together to achieve common revolutionary aims, then they can also come together for the common development of the Soviet state.

Mikoyan regularly drew attention to the multiethnic character of the Baku Commune in this manner. For example, during his March 1964 visit to Baku, Mikoyan chatted with oil workers on Oil Rocks, just off the Caspian Sea shore. Inquiring about their working and living conditions, he asked the workers “How do you live? Amicably?” “We are living amicably, Anastas Ivanovich,” one of the oilmen told him. Highlighting the multiethnic composition of his team, the worker noted that “Our team is international, and we live like a big family.” Mikoyan immediately drew the association with the commissars. “The Baku proletariat has always been famous for its internationalist traditions,” he replied warmly, before shaking their hands and wishing them well.<sup>115</sup>

Mikoyan stressed the necessity of re-teaching the story of the Baku 26, not only in the Caucasus, but throughout the USSR. In his criticism of Stalin’s *Short Course* at the XX Party Congress, Mikoyan called for “showing all the sides of our Soviet Fatherland rather than its lacquered façade.”<sup>116</sup> In other words, Mikoyan was calling for a broader view of the Revolution that encompassed narratives not only from the “Russian core,” but the republics as well, including the history of the Baku Commune. Party activists in Armenia “seconded” Mikoyan’s sentiments in the aftermath of the XX Party Congress and were even more overt in their opinions. In a report to the Soviet Central Committee from March 1956, Armenian First Secretary Suren Tovmasyan noted that in Leninakan

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<sup>115</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 3.

<sup>116</sup> Brandenberger and Zelenov, *Stalin’s Master Narrative*, 34.

(Gyumri), Party activists criticized the “incorrect” interpretation of history in the *Short Course*, which “failed to cover the activities of progressive Caucasian revolutionaries such as Comrades Shahumyan, Japaridze and other party leaders,” and instead “spoke only of Stalin.”<sup>117</sup> They went on to criticize the text for “undeservedly crediting Stalin with organizing the Red Army” and “ignoring the role of Lenin.” They also noted that “all theoretical developments on the national question were unjustly attributed to Stalin.” The Party activists also felt that Soviet secondary school textbooks, “which say little about the role of the Party and the people,” needed to have more coverage on the role of non-Russian nationalities in the history of the country. “Along with presenting the history of the Russian people,” they concluded, “it is also necessary to present the history of the other peoples of the USSR more fully than that which is currently given in the textbook.”<sup>118</sup> It is unclear how these young activists envisioned the presentation of such a history.

Mikoyan was especially committed to keeping Shahumyan’s memory alive. His earliest dedication to Shahumyan, originally written just months after his execution, was published in the newspaper *Kommunist* in Baku on the anniversary of his death in September 1921. In it, he wrote the following:

In the face of Comrade Shahumyan, our Party has lost an irreplaceable and talented leader in the Caucasus, and the Baku proletariat has lost its old and most-tested leader in the revolutionary struggle for communism. The vile executioners of this great fighter and martyr for the labor cause, raising their dirty hands over his bright life, knew very well what a bright star was fading from their treacherous blow on the red horizon of the international proletarian revolution. In their newspapers they were raving about their heinous misdeeds. Comrade Shahumyan was called the ‘Caucasian Lenin’... And they were right.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 52, l. 42.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 251, l. 107. For the full dedication, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 251, ll. 100-108.

Forty-seven years later, Mikoyan revisited his old fallen comrade in an article published in *Pravda* in commemoration of Shahumyan's 90th anniversary in October 1968.<sup>120</sup> "He [Shahumyan] had not yet reached the age of forty when he was killed in the Trans-Caspian sands among the 26 fiery Baku Commissars, at the hands of Socialist-Revolutionary executioners, mercenaries of British imperialism," Mikoyan wrote at the start of the piece. He added that Shahumyan and his associates "met death heroically, with proud exclamations: 'We are dying for communism!', 'Long live communism!'"<sup>121</sup> Such text hardly represented an "objective" telling of history, as Mikoyan had advised the Armenian historians in Yerevan, but it nevertheless stressed the place of the Baku 26 in the Soviet pantheon of Old Bolshevik revolutionaries.

More significant, Mikoyan used the article to underscore Shahumyan's important contributions to the development of the Soviet nationality policy, including his correspondences with Lenin on the matter. He noted that Shahumyan "had been engaged in studying the national question for a long time." "As early as 1906," he wrote, "he published a pamphlet entitled *The National Question and Social Democracy*, and in 1914 he wrote another pamphlet *On National Cultural Autonomy*." He added that Shahumyan has "exposed those nationalist Social Democrats" who "promoted the idea of splitting workers of different nationalities." In his article, Mikoyan recounted that Lenin had sought out Shahumyan's counsel, asking him "to prepare a statement about the brochure [on the national question] for publication in the Bolshevik magazine *Prosveshchenie*."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, "Obrazets revoliutsionera leninskoi gvardii – K 90-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia S. G. Shaumyana" ["Model Revolutionary of Lenin's Guard – To the 90th Anniversary of the Birth of S. G. Shahumyan"], *Pravda*, October 13, 1968, 3. The draft material for the article can be found in RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 251, ll. 1-39.

<sup>121</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, "Obrazets revoliutsionera leninskoi gvardii."

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Mikoyan also reflected on Shahumyan's correspondences with Lenin on the nationality question in an essay that he wrote on the Soviet nationality policy that was published as a booklet in 1972 by Progress



Additionally, Mikoyan emphasized Shahumyan's contributions to the Armenian Bolshevik revolutionary movement as they related to the nationality sphere, noting his co-founding of the Union of Armenian Social Democrats (later a part of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party) with Bogdan Knunyants.<sup>123</sup> In addition, Mikoyan stressed Shahumyan's efforts to translate Marxist literature into Armenian and Georgian in Geneva "under Lenin's leadership" and that it was here that he "struck up a strong friendship with Vladimir Il'ich that lasted throughout his life." Noting the growing interest in Shahumyan and his work, Mikoyan wrote that "half a century has passed since the death of Shahumyan, but his memory does not fade." His 1968 article was not his last dedication to Shahumyan. Mikoyan continued to work to preserve his comrade's legacy right until the very end. In 1977, one year before his own death, Mikoyan penned yet another article in honor of the 100th birthday of the revolutionary.<sup>124</sup>

During his travels throughout the Soviet Union, Mikoyan's memory of the Baku Commissars was never far behind. In January 1957, he flew to Turkmenistan for a five-day trip to award that republic the Order of Lenin for its successful cotton harvest for 1956.<sup>125</sup> However, Mikoyan also used the occasion to draw attention to the legacy of the commissars and to familiarize himself more deeply with a part of the Soviet Union that

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Publishers, in advance of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution (see A. I. Mikoyan, *USSR: A United Family of Nations*, 21-24).

<sup>123</sup> A. I. Mikoyan, "Obrazets revoliutsionera leninskoi gvardii." Mikoyan wrote: "In 1902, together with [Bogdan] Knunyants, Shahumyan headed the creation of the first Armenian Social Democratic organization – the Union of Armenian Social Democrats, which immediately became part of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). A manifesto written by Shahumyan was published in the first issue of the organ of this union – in the newspaper Proletariat. In *Iskra*, Lenin wrote: 'We wholeheartedly welcome the Manifesto of the Union of Armenian Social Democrats and a particularly excellent endeavor to provide a correct formulation of the national question.'"

<sup>124</sup> The material for the 1977 article can be found in RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 251, ll. 41-99.

<sup>125</sup> "Vruchenie ordena Lenina Turkmenskoi SSR" ["Presentation of the Order of Lenin to the Turkmen SSR"], *Pravda*, January 22, 1957, 1.

played a prominent role in their story.<sup>126</sup> After inspecting two collective farms specializing in cotton production near the city of Mary, Mikoyan arrived in Ashkhabad.<sup>127</sup> It was there that he delivered an address invoking the memory of the commissars:

I am here in Ashkhabad for the third time, but each time I come here in a completely different way. I was in Turkmenistan for the first time during the difficult days of the English occupation. I was a prisoner, in Krasnovodsk, Kizyl-Arvat, and then in the city of Ashkhabad, and, from there, I was deported in orderly fashion back to Baku. And so, I was deprived of the opportunity to get to know your city, and I did not see it. My second visit was already in 1920, in early April, together with Comrade Frunze, when the first train from Tashkent arrived in Ashkhabad, after the city was liberated from the English occupiers and the Whites. At that time, I also did not have a chance to see the city – I was in a rush to get to Baku for underground work in preparation for the revolution in Azerbaijan. And now, on my third visit, I hope to get acquainted with Ashkhabad.<sup>128</sup>

He also likened Ashkhabad's occupation by the British army and White Russian forces during the Civil War to Britain's role in the Suez Crisis against Egypt. He reminded them that just as they had freed themselves from the British, "with the help of the Russian proletariat," so had the Egyptian people "now cut off the tail of the English colonial lion and free themselves from the English yoke, as Comrade Khrushchev wittily said."<sup>129</sup>

More significant was Mikoyan's trip to Baku of March 25-30, 1964. The main purpose of his visit was to deliver a marathon four-hour long improvised speech at a meeting of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, entitled *The Struggle of the CPSU for the Consolidation of the International Communist*

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<sup>126</sup> Mikoyan's trip Turkmenistan lasted from 19 to 24 January 1957. His itinerary included attending, among other events, Turkmen equestrian and national wrestling competitions, as well as a performance of the Turkmen national opera *Shahsenem and Gharib* by Dangatar Ovezov and Adrian Shaposhnikov at the Ashkhabad Makhtumkuli Opera and Ballet Theatre. For Mikoyan's full itinerary, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1288, ll. 6-10.

<sup>127</sup> "Prebyvanie A. I. Mikoyana v Maryiskoi oblasti" ["Stay of A. I. Mikoyan in the Mary Oblast"], *Turkmenskaia Iskra*, January 22, 1957, 1.

<sup>128</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1288, ll. 18-19. See also: "Pribyte v Ashkhabad tovarishcha A. I. Mikoyana" ["Arrival of Comrade A. I. Mikoyan in Ashkhabad"], *Turkmenskaia Iskra*, January 22, 1957, 1.

<sup>129</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1288, l. 19.

*Movement*.<sup>130</sup> However, as he did in Turkmenistan, Mikoyan also used the occasion to honor the memory of the Baku 26, as well as Baku Bolsheviks who had survived both the Civil War and Stalin's Purges. On the third day of his visit, Mikoyan went to the memorial commemorating his fallen comrades at 26 Baku Commissars Square, accompanied by Soviet Azerbaijan's First Secretary Vali Akhundov, Chairman of Azerbaijan's Council of Ministers Enver Alikhanov, and many other Azerbaijani officials as well as Old Baku Bolsheviks. At the solemn ceremony, Mikoyan laid a wreath at the graves of the commissars with a ribbon featuring the inscription: "To the Fierce Fighters for the Cause of Communism, the 26 Baku Commissars, from Anastas Mikoyan." He also inspected the monument dedicated to their memory sculpted by Sergei Merkurov.<sup>131</sup>

Afterwards, Mikoyan and the Azerbaijani government entourage led by Akhundov traveled to inspect Oil Rocks, the very first offshore oil drilling site in the world. At an impromptu gathering on one of the Caspian platforms, Akhundov introduced Mikoyan as "one of the leaders of the Baku revolutionary proletariat, an outstanding Soviet party and state figure, and companion of Comrade Khrushchev."<sup>132</sup> The oilmen listened attentively to Mikoyan's reportedly lively speech, in which he invoked the memory of the commissars and his own efforts to organize workers in Baku:

I had to work with Baku oilmen in the pre-revolutionary years when we organized them in order to prepare them to seize power. In those days, the *tartal'shiki* worked in the oil fields. Many of you probably have no idea what this word means today. The life of the workers was hard. Poverty and illiteracy were their lot. At that time, many political parties fought for influence among the working masses, posing as

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<sup>130</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 2. Mikoyan improvised virtually the entire speech, referring only occasionally to a few notes that he had prepared for it. He was praised for this feat by Azerbaijani Old Bolshevik Mamed Veisov in his meeting with Old Bolsheviks in Baku on the final day of his visit (see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 26).

<sup>131</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 2.

<sup>132</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 3.

defenders of the interests of the people. But the dark, illiterate Baku oilmen unmistakably identified their true friend and followed the Bolsheviks. The working class of Baku has always been a citadel of Bolshevism.<sup>133</sup>

Mikoyan went on to cast the Baku oilmen as “the vanguard of the working class.”<sup>134</sup> By highlighting his audience as the heirs of the Baku 26 and the traditions of Bakuvian multiculturalism, he was making a seemingly distant past appear not so distant. Even more significantly, he was again stressing the importance and relevance of the story of the Baku 26 to contemporary Soviet life.

The following day, accompanied by Akhundov, Alikhanov, and others, Mikoyan visited the nearby town Sumgait. Although the town became infamous decades later for the eruption of anti-Armenian violence, at the time of Mikoyan’s visit, the prospect of such bloodshed was far from anyone’s mind.<sup>135</sup> If anything, it was only a distant memory of the nightmarish ethnic upheavals that once engulfed the Caucasus in the final years of the Russian Empire. Mikoyan contrasted the memory of such violence with the internationalism of the commissars, whose efforts to work together across ethnic lines continued to live on in the then model Soviet community of Sumgait. Boasting of the city’s apparent reputation for tolerance and coexistence, Sumgait Party Committee Secretary N. Balakishev even proudly called Sumgait “the city of the friendship of peoples, in which representatives of over 40 nationalities live and work as one big family.”<sup>136</sup>

In the era of *druzhba narodov*, the Armenian Mikoyan was “warmly greeted” by the majority Azerbaijani residents of Sumgait.<sup>137</sup> A citywide rally for Mikoyan was organized

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<sup>133</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 5.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> For more background on the 1988 Sumgait pogrom, see Samuel Shahmuradian, ed. *The Sumgait Tragedy, Pogroms Against Armenians in Soviet Azerbaijan: Eyewitness Accounts*, trans. Steven Jones (Cambridge, MA: The Zoryan Institute, 1990).

<sup>136</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 7.

<sup>137</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 6.

by the Soviet Azerbaijani government in the city's Chemists' Palace of Culture, where Mikoyan received a standing ovation and a reception by local pioneers.<sup>138</sup> The proceedings commenced with various speakers again boasting of the town's tolerance and multiculturalism. Whether their words reflected genuine feelings of tolerance, performances with an eye to personal elevation in the Communist Party, or both remains an open question. The first speaker, Balakishev lauded Mikoyan as an "outstanding party and state figure," an "old Bakuvian," and a "great friend of the Azerbaijani people."<sup>139</sup> Following him, the Old Baku Bolshevik, D. N. Telzner, reflected on his personal memories of Mikoyan and added that "the brotherly friendship of peoples is growing and strengthening" in Azerbaijan. "This development is especially evident in our enterprises, in our city [Sumgait], where Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Russians and many representatives of other nationalities live and work side by side," he said. "We will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Azerbaijan's unification with Russia as a great holiday celebrating the friendship of peoples."<sup>140</sup> In his remarks to Mikoyan, Veniamin Aghamoghlanov, Secretary of the Sumgait City Committee of the Komsomol, went so far as to tell the Armenian statesman that "starting from today, please consider yourself a Sumgait citizen, a citizen of the city of youth and spring, where you are so welcome!"<sup>141</sup> He also stated that "your wartime activities of those days do not fade in the memory of the Old Bolsheviks, who carry their stories to us, the youth."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 37.

<sup>139</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 7.

<sup>140</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 60.

<sup>141</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 7.

<sup>142</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 65.

Still a new Soviet industrial town at the time, Sumgait was also one of Azerbaijan's leading industrial centers, second only to Baku. Therefore, for Mikoyan and other Party officials, it was also a showpiece for Soviet achievement since the time of the Baku Commune. For example, local Sumgait English teacher S. Ibrahimova underscored the significant changes in Azerbaijani society since 1917 as the realization of everything for which Mikoyan and the Baku 26 had fought. "Once our republic was 90% illiterate," she said in her speech at the Chemists' Palace, "and now we have become a republic of complete literacy. Now every fourth citizen of our republic is covered by some sort of education. There are many more students in schools in Azerbaijan than in schools in Iran and Turkey combined, although the population of these countries is 13 times larger than the population of our republic."<sup>143</sup> In his speech, Mikoyan matched Ibrahimova's kind words with plaudits for her as a symbol of the revolutionary progress achieved, referencing the unveiling campaign in Azerbaijan, and associating it with women's emancipation.<sup>144</sup> He lauded her ability to speak "perfectly and purely in Russian," while noting to the laughter of the audience, "and here I am, a man who, despite speaking Russian for many years, still has an [Armenian] accent!" "And," Mikoyan added, "as it turns out, she teaches English! An Azerbaijani woman who is fluent in Russian and teaches English! It speaks of

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<sup>143</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 63.

<sup>144</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 38. Mikoyan told his audience: "The teacher Ibrahimova spoke here today. Imagine if such a woman were to give such a speech in the 1920s, with an open face. She wouldn't be able to open her face to look at the people. The women [of Azerbaijan in those times] walked with their faces covered. And how many talented women were killed under this veil? There are as many talented Azerbaijani women in the Azerbaijani Republic today. It is possible to cite figures showing the success of the cultural revolution in Azerbaijan, but I would say that one fact stands above the figures, and that is the speech of the teacher Ibrahimova, a young educated Azerbaijani woman." Later, in his meeting with Baku Old Bolsheviks, Mikoyan expressed similar sentiments, marveling at Ibrahimova as a symbol of revolutionary success. "Imagine how much knowledge that girl has in her head," he said. "She is a symbol that we have won. You need to be proud of the results of all your labors, which have borne such fruits today" (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 19). For a good overview of the unveiling campaign from the perspective of local women in another Islamic part of the Soviet Union, see Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

great education and culture.”<sup>145</sup> Mikoyan also highlighted Sumgait itself as a reflection of revolutionary achievement, recalling that the city did not even exist in 1918 and noting that its rapid growth made it “not the brother of Baku, but rather the son of Baku.”<sup>146</sup>

However, in his Sumgait speech, Mikoyan reminded his audience that such progress could not have been made without the revolutionary sacrifices made by the Baku and Azerbaijani Bolshevik revolutionaries. “I am glad,” he said, “that at all meetings of the communists and workers of Azerbaijan, they consider it their duty to mention the names of those who gave their lives for the Revolution when they want to evaluate the historical path they have traveled and show how they confidently move forward to communism.” He identified commissars Shahumyan, Azizbekov, Japaridze, and Fioletov, as well as other Caucasian Bolsheviks as having “demonstrated their high adherence to principles and steadfastness in serving the revolutionary cause.”<sup>147</sup> He told his audiences that the revolutionary Bolshevik traditions of Baku “must be kept sacred,” but also fresh to incorporate “new methods of struggle, until communism is fully built.”<sup>148</sup> In his remarks, he further emphasized the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War against seemingly insurmountable odds. “Fourteen states threw their troops against us,” Mikoyan told his audience. “It was the entire counter-revolution.”<sup>149</sup>

Additionally, Mikoyan stressed the importance of learning the lessons of the revolutionaries by working together across ethnic lines to achieve common aims, in

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<sup>145</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 38-39.

<sup>146</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 40-41. As Mikoyan recalled: “In 1918, when there were battles not far from here, this place was empty. There was only one water tower, a pumping station. In 1920, on April 27, we went to Baku in an armored train to protect supplies from destruction. The first fighting took place here. That was Sumgait. The name was unknown. Just the station and water tower. There was nothing else and there was no water. Just the water tower and that was it.”

<sup>147</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 44.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 45.

opposition to national chauvinism. Gratified to see that the Baku working class had “preserved their revolutionary traditions,” Mikoyan underscored their role as the “bearers of the ideas of class cohesion, of internationalism, and of the friendship of peoples, and not of national disunity,” referring implicitly to the ethnic violence that rocked Baku during the civil war. He stressed that the “working class is comprised of workers of all nations who are brothers” and that “the capitalists of all nations are their enemies.”<sup>150</sup> Mikoyan contrasted the earlier history of ethnic strife with that of contemporary Soviet Baku, which he highlighted as a “good example” of a city of ethnic and confessional coexistence with “workers, toilers, and intelligentsia [] imbued with the ideas of internationalism.” He added that Baku was building a “strong friendship among all peoples” with “dynamic youth” and “nationalities from all parts of our country.”<sup>151</sup> He concluded his speech by giving a toast “in honor of the glorious Azerbaijani people,” the local Azerbaijani authorities, and “the fraternal friendship of peoples.”<sup>152</sup>

The main event of the final day of Mikoyan’s Baku visit, on March 30, was a special private meeting that he had with Old Baku Bolsheviks, about half of whom were rehabilitated survivors of Stalin’s Purges.<sup>153</sup> It was arranged by Akhundov and the Azerbaijani government in the republic’s Central Committee building.<sup>154</sup> Mikoyan commended Akhundov for arranging the meeting. “Azerbaijan has not forgotten its leaders,” he said. “This is such a concordance of generations, a spirit of generations. It is

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<sup>150</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 44.

<sup>151</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 44-45.

<sup>152</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 8.

<sup>153</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 31.

<sup>154</sup> After the fall of his predecessor Mustafaev, Akhundov was known for taking a more cautious approach toward Azerbaijani nationalism, preferring to “emphasize economic problems rather than national issues in an attempt to avoid many of the bigger conflicts that had developed in republic governance.” For further information, see Goff, *Nested Nationalism*, 140.



necessary and useful for us to have this meeting.”<sup>155</sup> Once again, he expressed astonishment at Baku’s achievements since 1918, adding “allow me to say, comrades, that I cannot even find words to express my joy about meeting with you and about being in Baku. In fact, my perception of Baku lagged behind the reality. It was ahead of all our fantasies and expectations... We never expected then that we would have built so much.”<sup>156</sup>

Mikoyan used the occasion to again highlight the revolutionary sacrifice of the Baku 26 and underscored the position of the surviving Old Bolsheviks in Baku as carriers of their legacy. He told those present:

You had to have had great courage not only to remain a communist, but also to defend these ideas. And I must frankly say, perhaps you too remember such difficulties with great sweetness. Although the conditions were seemingly difficult, isn’t it much more rewarding to devote your youth to work and then reminisce about everything years later? Especially when you consider that these years will not be repeated. An interesting story, that once happened, and will never happen again. Our generation, which took part in the Revolution, in the struggle to establish Soviet power, was a lucky generation.<sup>157</sup>

Mikoyan’s stress on the “courage” of the Old Bolsheviks to “remain communists” applied just as much to their experiences as victims of Stalinism as it could to their experiences in the Baku revolutionary movement. He also emphasized that Baku had special conditions for producing revolutionaries “capable of enduring all the difficulties in the struggle of the working class.” “Leningrad aside,” he added, “there were few cities with such conditions.”<sup>158</sup> While recounting episodes from the Revolution in Baku, Mikoyan noted that the “death of the leaders of the Baku Commune sobered those workers who had been mistaken before” and they became “new, more confident people, who have experienced

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<sup>155</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 9.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 9-11.

<sup>158</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 11.

life and practice, who have found the answer to their words not in books, but in life.”<sup>159</sup> He underscored that the history of the Baku revolutionaries overcoming national differences in the service of revolutionary aims was significant as it spoke “to the strength of the working class” and “to the strength of Lenin’s ideas.”<sup>160</sup>

Mikoyan was not the only one invoking the memory of the Revolution in Baku. Those present did as well, reminding Mikoyan of his own role in the Party organization. Old Bolshevik Ivan Gandiurin recalled his escape with Mikoyan from a Musavatist Azerbaijani jail during the civil war. “Cement floor, water, and millet – those were the conditions in which we were kept,” he recalled of the jailing. “They said, ‘We will send you to Denikin,’ and Denikin at that time was eager to get to Baku.”<sup>161</sup> He also recounted his role in the burial and funeral of the Baku 26. “How many tears there were, what a funeral it was,” he said. “They were killed for their work. They said that we are dying, but the youth who are now growing up will remember us and follow our path.”<sup>162</sup>

Gandiurin was not alone. Other Old Bolsheviks reflected on their memories of their revolutionary years in Baku. Natalia Abramova reflected on an episode in 1920 at the Baku workers’ club on the location of Sabir Square. This de facto party headquarters was frequented by all of Baku’s most prominent Bolshevik leaders – Mirzoyan, Pleshakov, Mikoyan, Shatunovskaia, and others. It was in a secret room at this club where Abramova recalled speaking at the first Baku Party Congress. “Comrade Mikoyan asked which districts were ready to fight the Musavatists, how many party cells were organized, and

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<sup>159</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 12-13.

<sup>160</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 14. On the importance of the “return to Leninism” during the Thaw, see Polly Jones, “From the Secret Speech to the burial of Stalin: Real and ideal responses to de-Stalinization,” in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era*, ed. Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 42-43.

<sup>161</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 22.

<sup>162</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 35.

what reserves were in each district,” she remembered. “I was young then, and I spoke with great timidity. This was my first speech at such a responsible meeting.”<sup>163</sup> Similarly, Mamed Veisov recalled Mikoyan’s ability to deliver speeches on-the-fly, and fondly recounted the telegram that Mikoyan sent to Lenin in 1919 referring to Baku as “the hotbed of future socialist revolution in Azerbaijan” and “a boiling cauldron of Bolshevik enthusiasm.” “These lines are always read by us with excitement,” he said.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, Veisov recalled reading an article by an English general in a magazine in Iran in 1920, describing the Baku 26 as “much stronger dead than alive.”<sup>165</sup>

Mikoyan was pleased when Akhundov informed him that the Azerbaijani government was dispatching the Old Baku Bolsheviks to factories and plants to meet the workers and give speeches recounting the city’s revolutionary past. “It is necessary! It is necessary!” Mikoyan stressed. “And it is very useful. Young people think that all this was easy – that the decision was made, approved, and that was all. Such is what they think, and they think that all this was going according to plan and that everyone foresaw in advance when to retreat and when to win. Life often does not go according to plan.” One of the Old Bolsheviks present, Gandiurin, fully agreed. “Young people think that the doors were opened, and that Soviet power just walked right in,” he said.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 25.

<sup>164</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 28.

<sup>165</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 26-29. Veisov also discussed Mikoyan’s role in defusing the Cuban Missile Crisis. “We will never forget,” he said “that when you were in Cuba and [your wife] Ashkhen *Badji* [honorific title for an Armenian woman] died at that moment, you, Fidel Castro and Comrade Khrushchev directly led this major historic operation. And [during the crisis] the rhythm of your heart, as well as the rhythm of Fidel Castro’s and Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev’s, beat simultaneously with the heart of the entire Soviet people, especially the people of Baku.” (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 27.) For more on Mikoyan’s role in defusing the Cuban Missile Crisis, see Sergo A. Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November*, ed. by Svetlana Savranskaya (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012).

<sup>166</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 18.

For their part, those present emphasized their role in upholding the memory of the Baku revolutionaries. One was Frida Shlemova, the widow of Ruhulla Akhundov, a victim of the Purges in Azerbaijan. She told Mikoyan of her efforts to actively keep her husband's legacy alive. "When I returned here [to Baku]," she said. "I worked on all of Ruhulla's documents for some time. His autobiography is at the Institute of Party History. He cannot now convey his words of love to you. I know how much he cherished his meeting with you. He wrote: 'In 1917, I met Mikoyan, and in 1918, I worked at *Izvestiia* of the Baku Soviet. I owe my Party spirit to Comrade Mikoyan.' Anastas Ivanovich, on my own behalf and on behalf of Ruhulla, thank you for everything you have done."<sup>167</sup> Shlemova was not alone. Abramova and Gandiurin both stated that they and other Old Bolsheviks were working actively to impart such memories to the youth. "I wanted to say that Soviet power won, but certainly not easily," Abramova said. "And we relate such episodes to our youth. Victory did not just happen by itself. It was won by the working class and, in our recollections, we relate how our Party led the victory of the Revolution."<sup>168</sup>

The 1964 meeting with the Baku Old Bolsheviks was also significant for the fact that Mikoyan used the occasion to directly tie the fate of the 26 commissars with that of the victims of Stalinism, both of which Mikoyan framed as victims of tyranny.<sup>169</sup> Approximately half of the Old Bolsheviks present at the meeting were victims of the Purges and the Gulag, including all of those who spoke.<sup>170</sup> All had been rehabilitated by the Soviet government after Stalin's death and, as was customary, all praised Khrushchev and

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<sup>167</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 21-22.

<sup>168</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 24 and 22.

<sup>169</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 15.

<sup>170</sup> As Suren Badamyan noted in the meeting, "50% of those sitting here were victims [of Stalinism]" (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 31).

Mikoyan for their efforts in rehabilitating former political prisoners and dismantling Stalin's cult of personality. As with Mikoyan's 1954 speech in Yerevan, the meeting highlighted a fascinating intersection between Mikoyan's contribution on de-Stalinization and his efforts to uphold the memory of the Baku 26 as revolutionaries who overlooked national differences in the pursuit of common aims. The transcript of the meeting, held at the Russian State Archive (GARF), is also significant as it offers a rare glimpse of Mikoyan's views of de-Stalinization in a private setting during the Thaw.

Notably, a day before the meeting, Mikoyan had already implicitly referred to Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in his speech in Sumgait, discussing "mistakes" made by the Party and the need for Leninist self-criticism. In his meeting with the Old Bolsheviks, Mikoyan would voice his thoughts on this matter more openly and directly, often using the same language, but specifically mentioning Stalin and his crimes. However, in the presence of public company in Sumgait, he chose to take a more cautious and diplomatic approach. Mikoyan stated:

Comrades, our Party had difficulties in building a socialist state. There were many mistakes and defeats. However, without these, nothing can happen. Do not think that everything went smoothly, that we only went forward and forward. No, there have been defeats and mistakes, but in the end, everything ended with the victory of Bolshevism, the victory of Lenin's ideas. We won in October and we won the Civil War. ...We have very good people, but there are also very bad people. There are few, but they spoil the blood of many and many. In that regard, a lot of work needs to be done. We have had, and will have, miscalculations and mistakes, but the Central Committee is certain that we are not afraid to admit them, we do not hide them before the people, and this helps the people to understand and mobilize themselves. Lenin said that you need to have the courage to tell the people the truth and to say it no matter what it may be. He knew that only in this way could the Party gain support from the people, eliminate all shortcomings, and attain success. And this is done by our Central Committee, and in this Central Committee of our Party, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev plays an important role in developing self-criticism, revealing shortcomings and highlighting achievements.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 45 and 48.

At his meeting with the Old Bolsheviks, Mikoyan went much further, by directly associating the tragic fate of the Baku 26 with the fate of the victims of Stalinism, framing both as martyrs for the socialist revolutionary cause. “We must also respect the memory of those who died,” Mikoyan began, “including the 26 Baku commissars and the brutally tortured Nariman Narimanov... as well as others.”<sup>172</sup> From this point, Mikoyan shifted to the impact of Stalinism and the Purges on the Baku Bolsheviks. He advised those present to “not forget those who died as a result of the tyranny of the personality cult of Stalin” and to “honor their memory” as well.<sup>173</sup> The cautious Mikoyan tempered his criticism of Stalin by calling him a “good manager” who “defeated the Zinovievites and Trotskiites,” but who also made “rash decisions” on collectivization “in which there could have been, and would have been, fewer casualties.” However, Mikoyan told his audience that although “we scored a victory on collectivization and it went very quickly,” Stalin changed dramatically soon afterwards. “He did all of this, and then suddenly Stalin became different,” he claimed.<sup>174</sup>

Mikoyan proceeded to chronicle the tragic fate of several prominent Baku and Azerbaijani Bolshevik revolutionaries who were killed during the Purges. “You see how many people died,” Mikoyan told those present. “Stalin knew [Mirza Davud] Huseynov well. When Huseynov came [to Moscow] once or twice a year, he met and talked with him. Then Stalin disengaged and did not meet with anyone. He only accepted [Mir Jafar] Bagirov and did not accept others.” Mikoyan continued: “Stalin killed Huseynov, as well as [Gazanfar] Musabekov, who was a very good man and a communist. I met with him

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<sup>172</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 15.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

when he came to Moscow from Baku. I also met with him in 1919 in Astrakhan. I came to Baku with him and [Habib] Jabiev from there. Musabekov was an honest man, he fell victim and was killed [by Stalin]. For what?”<sup>175</sup>

Mikoyan began naming the names of other prominent Azerbaijani Old Bolsheviks who became victims of the Purges, including Dadash Bunyadzade, Hamid Sultanov, and, in a nod to Shlemova, Ruhulla Akhundov. He lauded the latter as “a well-trained Marxist and a principled man from the Azerbaijani Party intelligentsia.” “He was an outstanding individual,” Mikoyan recalled. “He too became a victim of tyranny. Did anyone ever think that it would be like this? Everyone could expect that they would die for the ideas of Marxism. But death by their own hands? No one thought this, and many other comrades were killed [by Stalin].”<sup>176</sup> Mikoyan also raised the case of Armenian Old Bolshevik Levon Mirzoyan, another victim of the Purges who served as First Secretary of Azerbaijan during the late 1920s and later as First Secretary of Kazakhstan during the 1930s. “We arrived with him from prison across the Caspian. He was young and literate and played a big role here [in Azerbaijan]. To this day, he is remembered in Kazakhstan as the best Raikom Secretary. Mirzoyan too was killed. It is simply not clear why Stalin began to destroy the best cadres of the Soviet government, who trusted him and never opposed him. They fought for the Party and were ready to die for it at any time.”<sup>177</sup>

Mikoyan’s calls to remember the victims of Stalinism in Azerbaijan were also accompanied by praise for the key role that Khrushchev played in de-Stalinization. In his words about Khrushchev, Mikoyan invoked his full name, including patronymic, to

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<sup>175</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 15-16.

<sup>176</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 16.

<sup>177</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 16-17.

emphasize his respect for his ally and his great historical act. “We remember these episodes so as not to forget our fallen comrades, and to highly appreciate the great work that our Central Committee has done in the struggle against the cult of personality,” he said. “Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev played a particularly important role here. And if not for him, if the struggle against the cult of personality had never been launched, then the atmosphere of Party spirit would not have been created as it is now.” The room erupted in applause, after which Mikoyan added “because the fact is that if the leader had been Beria, then it is completely unknown how it would have ended.”<sup>178</sup> He continued:

Therefore, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev played a particularly important role [in the dismantling of Stalin’s personality cult] and it is difficult to find words to evaluate this moment. As for the others – Molotov, Kaganovich – they, of course, are not Beria. Together with Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, they participated in the liquidation of Beria. However, they too were carriers of the ideas of the cult. They were very supportive of Stalin and tried to have more [of Stalin’s cult]. Moreover, Stalin would not have refused to correct such moves. What Nikita Sergeevich said then at the XX Congress, when he told the truth to the Party about what happened, we did not want to speak about, because the enemies were in front of us. It was Nikita Sergeevich who made such a report.

We recall the heavy sacrifices suffered by our Party at the hands of our own Party in order to appreciate the high significance of the turning point made by the XX Party Congress, and that at that time, nothing like that could have happened in the Party. That is why, comrades, we, in reviewing the past of our Party, must say that this path traveled was not so smooth without a bump. Therefore, we highly appreciate the fact that our Party and our working class were so strong both internally and ideologically that even such things as the dismantling of Stalin and his personality cult could not lead the Party off the right path. We thank our Party for having stood the test of history so well, and now it has become the center of world events.<sup>179</sup>

Mikoyan’s plaudits were motivated not only by admiration for Khrushchev’s historic deed, but also by high Kremlin politics. His apparent political aim was to bolster Khrushchev’s anti-Stalinist initiatives, especially in the aftermath of the XXII Party

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<sup>178</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 17.

<sup>179</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 17-18.



Congress. Given Mikoyan's longstanding ties to the Baku Party organization, the city seemed a natural place to rally support for the anti-Stalinist cause, especially given that so many Baku Old Bolsheviks had been decimated by the Purges. In this context, Mikoyan could count on a warm reception from his old Bakuvian comrades. The meeting also served to bolster support for Khrushchev among Old Bolsheviks and former political prisoners, during a time when the position of the Soviet leader was becoming increasingly tenuous in the Kremlin.<sup>180</sup> After all, Khrushchev's "zeks" (i.e., former political prisoners) served as an important bloc of supporters, both for his leadership and for de-Stalinization.<sup>181</sup> Mikoyan's emphasis on Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, as well as his work on rehabilitating Gulag survivors, was therefore especially significant. The meeting in general once again highlighted the reality that the struggle within the Soviet Union over Stalin's legacy was just as much a political issue as it was a moral and historical one. Mikoyan's unfavorable references to Beria, Molotov, and Kaganovich as "carriers" of Stalin's ideas underscored this political significance.

In response to Mikoyan's words, many Old Bolsheviks spoke. These former Gulag prisoners and repressed "former people" thanked Khrushchev and Mikoyan for their roles on de-Stalinization and emphasized the importance of preserving the memory of the victims of Stalinism, just as they had with preserving the memory of the Baku commissars. Frida Shlemova expressed her joy at being able to see Mikoyan again. "In 1955, when I was being rehabilitated, I was at your dacha," she said. "But at that time, I was so

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<sup>180</sup> William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 615.

<sup>181</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, *The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag After Stalin* (Exeter, NH: Publishing Works, 2010), 87-112. Additionally, as historian Samuel Casper has shown, Mikoyan's Bakuvian revolutionary circle comprised one of his patronage networks (see Samuel A. Casper, "The Bolshevik Afterlife: Posthumous Rehabilitation in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1953-1970" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2018), 44).

overwhelmed by what had happened that I could not say everything I wanted.” She proceeded to remind Mikoyan about his role in her upbringing and education as a young Party member. “You were young, and I was just a girl,” she said. “I really wanted to be a good Party member. That was everybody’s dream. And so, I remember in 1921 or at the beginning of 1922, when Ruhulla and I were in Moscow, we met with you and we discussed what it takes to be a real Bolshevik.”<sup>182</sup> She emphasized her loyalty to the principles of the Party even after that same party under Stalin had condemned her to the Gulag and her husband to execution. She recounted one episode when the prisoners learned of the release of an Old Bolshevik and yet continued to praise Stalin. “The whole prison began to shout: Long live Stalin!” she said. “Although we were in prison, although we were accused of the devil knows what, the whole prison shouted: Long live Stalin! Because we believed that Stalin knew nothing about it. Only afterwards did I understand the whole reality.”<sup>183</sup>

Jeyran Bairamova, widow of Azerbaijani Bolshevik revolutionary Ali Bayramov and a survivor of the Purges, also expressed her gratitude to both Khrushchev and Mikoyan for their role in the rehabilitation of political prisoners:

Comrade Mikoyan, when I was elected a delegate, our women, both rehabilitated and non-rehabilitated, very much asked to convey our sincere greetings to our Central Committee of the Party, and personally to Comrade Khrushchev. We are very grateful to him for giving us a second life after rehabilitation, returning to us the freedom that was given to us by the October Revolution and Lenin’s party. I beg you, Comrade Mikoyan, to convey our sincere regards and even a kiss from all women to Comrade Khrushchev for releasing us. We wish you Comrade Mikoyan good health and that it will not be your first or second visit, but that you will visit us several more times and not forget our Azerbaijan. Come more often. We wish you good health and many years of life. Although we are old, Comrade Mikoyan, you feel that the more we age, the more our soul becomes younger. Long live our Communist Party, led by Comrade Khrushchev!<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 20.

<sup>183</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 21.

<sup>184</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 30.

Bairamova was followed by Suren Badamyan, the former Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast', who was arrested during Bagirov's reign in 1937.<sup>185</sup> Another former "enemy," Badamyan thanked Mikoyan and Khrushchev for their role in rehabilitating victims of the Purges, but also caution against forgetting about Stalin's crimes. He stated:

There is one thing that I must ask you to convey to Comrade Khrushchev. 50% of those sitting here are victims. These are comrades who somehow brought their bones to their homeland in the city of Baku. We owe all of this to Comrade Khrushchev. If not for him, no one would have taken the liberty of bringing these cadres back, restoring those Leninist norms that are dear to our party. On behalf of the entire Baku Party organization, especially on behalf of the victims, I ask you to convey to Comrade Khrushchev the message that we are grateful to him for giving us the opportunity to return and work honestly in his party organization.<sup>186</sup>

Badamyan also expressed concern about society potentially forgetting the years of Stalin's Purges, fearing a return to the cult of personality otherwise. Nevertheless, he stressed that the Soviet Azerbaijani had treated rehabilitated political prisoners "exceptionally well." "We have no complaints," he said, adding that Akhundov and the Azerbaijani leadership, as well as the Presidium of the Central Committee" had fulfilled all their requests. With a touch of humor, he added that "the older you get, the more whimsical you become" and

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<sup>185</sup> In the meeting, Badamyan also recounted a story underscoring Mikoyan's links to his Bakuvian network: "Comrade Mikoyan is a Bakuvian. Why Bakuvian? Because you are a true Bakuvian. I cannot say that I worked with you in the years of 1918-1919-1920. However, I want to tell you an episode from 1931. Faraj-Zadeh, Mir Bashir Gasimov, and I arrived in Moscow. We didn't succeed in securing economic support [for a project] and so we were in trouble. We decided to go to the Bakuvian Mikoyan. We arrived. As soon as we told the secretary to write down that we were Bakuvians, the secretary said 'Ah, Bakuvians! They will accept you, go.' Indeed, the next day we received a call and we came. As soon as we arrived, those who were sitting were told that since the Bakuvians came, you can go, they will sit for a long time with Comrade Mikoyan." Badamyan highlighted the story as a reflection of Mikoyan's lasting love for Baku. "Those who travel from Baku are always number one," he said. "If they failed to get through to some institutions, then the Bakuvians knew that everything could be achieved through Comrade Mikoyan. Since they are Bakuvians, help will be provided to Baku. Anastas Ivanovich, you really have done a lot for Baku, and we know you as a Bakuvian... You love Baku most of all." "Correct," Mikoyan responded. (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 30-31.)

<sup>186</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 31-33.

that “sometimes these [Azerbaijani] comrades just have to baby sit us.” However, he noted that many Old Bolsheviks continued to work, regardless of old age. “In particular, I will soon turn 70, and I still work,” he said. “Many people, who are able to work, do work, and those who cannot work are constantly supported [by the state].” Stressing his continued loyalty to the Party, despite his imprisonment, he concluded “we believe in the Party organization. We have always been with it and we will continue to be with it.”<sup>187</sup>

Above all, the narratives on the fate of the Baku 26, invoked by Mikoyan and kept alive by the surviving Old Bolsheviks, stressed the notion of a group of committed revolutionaries who overlooked ethnic and national differences in the pursuit of common revolutionary aims. Mikoyan specifically aimed to highlight them as realizations of the Soviet notion of *druzhba narodov* and therefore to promote their memory in order to strengthen the coexistence of the various national groups within the Soviet state for the sake of its stability and unity. However, Mikoyan’s use of these historical narratives was not restricted to the nationality sphere. He also invoked them in the context of de-Stalinization, placing the deaths of the commissars on par with the deaths of the victims of Stalin’s Purges. Thus, the story of the commissars served to promote not only notions of national coexistence, but also the kinship shared between the Baku 26 and former political prisoners and survivors of Stalinism.

## **Conclusions**

Moscow met the rising demands for greater national expression in the republics with different responses. One response involved more coercive policies that acted as rebukes

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<sup>187</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, ll. 31-33.

to perceived nationalist excesses, like the 1958 educational reform or the purge of leaderships in republics like Latvia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. By contrast, the invocation of historical narratives presented a more inclusive response that fused nationalism with Soviet ideology in the service of promoting the unity of the state. This approach was favored by Mikoyan, who employed historical narratives to meet the rising demands for increased national expression in the Caucasus, drawing on his authority as an eyewitness of, and participant in, the revolutionary events that swept up the region in 1918-20.

In the Armenian case, Mikoyan invoked narratives that stressed the hybrid Soviet Armenian identity, bringing together Armenian nationalism with socialist ideology, a decidedly “Apricot socialist” approach. Through these narratives, Mikoyan stressed to Soviet Armenian audiences that such identities were complementary and actively in conversation with each other. However, although he spoke to Armenian national narratives and Armenian national experiences, he stopped short of attempting to write Armenian history himself. When Soviet Armenian historians sought his counsel given his status as a participant in the events of 1918-20, Mikoyan would acquiesce with reservations, insisting that only they could do the work of professional historians on their own in accordance with an “objective” Marxist-Leninist framework.

In the context of Azerbaijan and Baku, Mikoyan invoked narratives of the 26 Baku commissars to promote the concept of the *druzhiba narodov*, to foster greater coexistence among the various national groups of the Caucasus generally. The context again was the rising demand for national expression of the 1950s. Rather than respond to such developments with a hard line, Mikoyan was inclined to demonstrate the benefits of unity among different nationalities in the service of common revolutionary aims. He

demonstrated this point through the case of the Baku 26, by underscoring their multiethnic composition in the service of the Revolution. Mikoyan overlaid this episode with the contemporary Thaw-era effort to build socialism toward the objective of the realization of a communist society. He also went beyond employing such narratives in the service of nationality policy by placing them in dialogue with the political struggle over de-Stalinization. In his March 1964 meeting with Old Bolsheviks in Baku, Mikoyan stressed the kinship shared between the Baku 26 and victims of Stalinism, underscoring both groups as martyrs for revolutionary socialism.

This more inclusive approach toward the rising demands for greater national expression constituted an alternative to the harder policies of the Soviet government during the Thaw. It highlights that, in the struggle between Moscow and the republics to define the extent of acceptable national expression, there were different possible responses. Mikoyan's use of historical narratives to promote an inclusive approach toward nationalism and coexistence among national groups constituted one such response, amid Khrushchev's broader reform agenda of reversing Stalinist dictatorship.

### Chapter 3: Apricot Patronage: Mikoyan's Armenian Network

In addition to his invocation of historical narratives of the Caucasus, Mikoyan used his position as a Supreme Soviet Deputy for Armenia to highlight his native republic as a model of Soviet success in the nationality sphere. Although he had served in a consultative role for Yerevan in his Supreme Soviet position since 1937, it was during the Thaw that he became much more actively involved in Armenian affairs. He provided crucial assistance to the Armenian leadership on everything from the development of local village economies in places like Sanahin and Hankavan to support for large economic projects, such as the Arzni-Shamiram or Arpa-Sevan canals. However, Mikoyan's involvement in Armenia had another dimension. As this study will show, his efforts to highlight the republic as a model success during the Thaw also fostered a regional Armenian patronage network that was loyal to him.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, just as Khrushchev had two networks of his own (i.e., Moscow and Ukraine), so did Mikoyan, in the cases of Armenia and Baku.<sup>2</sup>

An examination of patronage networks provides us with a window into the ways in which politics functioned in the Soviet Union. As used in this chapter, the term “patronage network” refers to a “coalition of individuals who share at least one goal and who agree to

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<sup>1</sup> On Thaw-era patronage networks, see Nikolai Mitrokhin, “The rise of political clans in the era of Nikita Khrushchev,” in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 26–40. Such networks were not unique to the Thaw and played a crucial role in Russian and Soviet life throughout history. The works dealing with this subject are too numerous to list exhaustively here, but one of the latest examples dealing with the issue in the context of the Stalin era is Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk's *Substate Dictatorship: Networks, Loyalty, and Institutional Change in the Soviet Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Mitrokhin discusses Khrushchev's Ukraine and Moscow networks in “The rise of political clans”, 26–40. Samuel Casper has written about Mikoyan's Caucasian/Bakuvian revolutionary network and its role in the process of post-Stalin rehabilitations. This study builds on Casper's work by highlighting that Mikoyan's patronage network was not just limited to Baku but encompassed Armenia as well. Significantly, Mikoyan's Bakuvian network also included many Armenians. For Casper's study, see Casper, “The Bolshevik Afterlife: Posthumous Rehabilitation in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1953–1970” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2018).

pool their resources in pursuit of that shared goal.” Such a network “requires a sure leader and a group of members who are working toward the common goal.”<sup>3</sup> In the case of Thaw-era Armenia, that leader was Mikoyan, and the group of members were the republic’s most prominent political figures, among them Yakov Zarobyan, Anton Kochinyan, and Yeghishe Astsatryan. These leaders worked with Mikoyan collaboratively on various projects in Armenia and came to regard him as the most senior partner in the collective project to “build socialism” in the republic.

Through common bonds of culture, language, and national identity, Mikoyan was able to establish a personal connection with these leaders, granting Armenia its own informal conduit to the Kremlin. He also rewarded loyalty among members of his network, as reflected in the case of Zarobyan’s appointment to the NPNSC Subcommittee.<sup>4</sup> Building on the Maïke Lehmann’s concept of “Apricot socialism” (i.e., a hybrid “Soviet” and “Armenian” identity), one might call Mikoyan’s work in Armenia a form of “Apricot patronage.”<sup>5</sup> This term refers to the Armenian national fruit, the apricot, whose orange-reddish skin reflects, in Lehmann’s words, “yet another variation of the revolutionary red.”<sup>6</sup> However, this phrase also alludes to the role of national communities and national affinities in the development of Soviet patronage networks.

The figures who comprised Mikoyan’s Armenian network had varied backgrounds, in terms of their positions and origins. Born in Artvin, a town in historical eastern Armenia that was annexed by Kemalist Turkey in 1921, Yakov Zarobyan served as Armenia’s First

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<sup>3</sup> John P. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 223-224.

<sup>4</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 17.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of “Apricot socialism” is defined in the introduction. For further information, see Maïke Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism: The National Past, the Soviet Project, and the Imagining of Community in Late Soviet Armenia,” *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 9-31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



Secretary from 1960 to 1966. Anton Kochinyan, who, like Mikoyan, was a native of Lori, served as the republic's Chairman of the Council of Ministers from 1952 to 1966 before assuming the post of Armenia's First Secretary from 1966 to 1974. A native of Nagorno-Karabakh, Yeghishe Atsatryan, who served as the Vice-Chairman of Armenia's Council of Ministers from 1962 to 1966, received crucial support from Mikoyan to pursue his career in Armenia.<sup>7</sup> Other figures in the network included Suren Tovmasyan, the republic's First Secretary from 1953 to 1960, and Georgi Ter-Ghazaryants, Second Secretary of the Armenian Central Committee in the 1960s and later a veteran Soviet diplomat.<sup>8</sup>

Mikoyan's work with these leaders was guided by his views on the Soviet nationality issue. In general, he perceived the economic development of all Soviet republics and sub-republican autonomies as an indicator of the successes of the Soviet nationality policy.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, he saw his work in Armenia as nothing less than the Soviet nationality policy in action and viewed the republic as a potential model for other republics and sub-national entities to follow.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the Armenian model would serve to

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<sup>7</sup> After his work in Mongolia during World War II, the Soviet Central Committee elected Atsatryan to become the Chairman of the Soviet-German Joint Stock Company in Germany. However, Atsatryan wanted to pursue his career in Armenia instead. He had already been in contact with Mikoyan during the war and appealed to him for support. Mikoyan endorsed Atsatryan's move, reasoning that "Armenia is in desperate need of qualified personnel at this time." Mikoyan then asked the Minister of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy, Petr Lomako, to assign Atsatryan to the position of Deputy Director of the Kanaker Aluminum Plant in Armenia. From this position, Atsatryan moved through the ranks of the Party, eventually becoming the Vice-Chairman of Armenia's Council of Ministers (Yeghishe Atsatryan, *XX dar. Hayastani karutsmann chanaparhin (Husher)* [20th Century: On the Path Toward the Construction of Armenia (Memoirs)] (Yerevan: Edit Print, 2004), 63-64).

<sup>8</sup> Mikoyan also maintained friendships with several major Armenian cultural and scientific figures, including Marshal Hovhannes Baghramyan, composer Aram Khachaturian, writer Marietta Shaginyan, astrophysicist Viktor Hambardzumyan, physicist Artem Alikhanyan., and architect Karo Halabyan.

<sup>9</sup> Mikoyan articulated this view in his writings and public speeches. For example, in his booklet *USSR: A United Family of Nations*, Mikoyan viewed the economic development in all 15 union republics as well as the autonomous republics of the North Caucasus as an indicator of the success of the Soviet nationality policy (see Mikoyan, *USSR: A United Family of Nations*, trans. David Skvirsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 58-69).

<sup>10</sup> Mikoyan expressed this view in his June 1970 speech in Yerevan, attributing the "enormity of the changes made over the past 50 years in Soviet Armenia" to the "implementation of the Leninist nationality policy by our Soviet country and the Soviet Communist Party" (RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 13).

highlight the success of the nationality policy to foreign observers, especially the Armenian Diaspora.<sup>11</sup> The idea of using a Soviet republic to showcase economic development was not unique to Mikoyan. As Artemy Kalinovsky reminds us, the Khrushchev government also employed this approach toward Central Asia, highlighting that region as a model for development in the Global South.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, through his work in Armenia and his promotion of his Armenian network, Mikoyan also demonstrated the strength of informal politics in the Soviet Union in the competition for resources among the various parts of the country.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, for Zarobyan, Kochinyan, Astsatryan, and others, their interest in securing resources for their republic intersected with Mikoyan's interest in highlighting Armenia as a model success story of the Soviet nationality policy.

This chapter also invites us to reconsider the larger historiographical question about whether the USSR constituted an empire.<sup>14</sup> Different authors define the concept of

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<sup>11</sup> Mikoyan emphasized to Armenian leaders the importance of the Diaspora's awareness of Soviet Armenia's successes (Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 77). By showcasing Armenia as a model of Soviet success in the nationality sphere, he sought to highlight to Diasporan audiences that the Soviet Union represented the best path for Armenia's national development, material well-being, and physical security (especially given the memory of the 1915 Genocide).

<sup>12</sup> For further information, see Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018). Eren Tasar makes a similar case regarding Moscow's use of the Central Asian *muftiate*, or Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM), during the Thaw as a tool in international affairs. For further information, see Chapter 5 of Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> One account by Astsatryan reveals that Mikoyan was cognizant of this contradiction. In the early 1960s, Aleksei Kosygin, then the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, decided to allocate cement resources to Armenia instead of Uzbekistan. He made the decision based on the fact that there was a great need for cement in Armenia and that Uzbekistan had not used its cement allocation. Astsatryan hoped that the matter would be promptly resolved by his birthday in August. However, the official decision was delayed because Kosygin had already left for his vacation in Sochi. "Kosygin had already gone on vacation," recalled Astsatryan, "and Mikoyan did not want to sign that decision. I called Anastas Ivanovich, explained the situation, and asked him to sign the document. He then told me, 'Think for a minute, if I sign this decision, will not the Uzbeks say that I have taken their cement and given it to Armenia?' Finally, I called Kosygin in Sochi. The government released the cement to us with his signature." (Astsatryan, *XX dar*: 84-85)

<sup>14</sup> This question has also been discussed in Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie Kivelson, *Russia's Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 337-340; and in Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 395-398. These authors argue that the USSR constituted an empire in different ways, based on different definitions on the concept of "empire."

“empire” in different ways and any definition is complicated by the existence of different models and meanings of “empire.” As Dominic Lieven best put it, “over the last two millennia the word ‘empire’ has meant many different things to different people from different countries at different times.”<sup>15</sup> In their work, Suny and Kivelson define “empire” as “a kind of state or... a particular form of dominion or control that is exercised inequitably and with different forms of domination and different relations of power in each of its multiple constituent subordinated regions.”<sup>16</sup> Burbank and Cooper similarly define “empires” as “large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people.”<sup>17</sup> The history of Mikoyan’s Armenian network suggests that the Soviet Union was not empire in the sense definition by Suny and Kivelson or Burbank and Cooper. Mikoyan’s joint work with his Armenian network frequently blurred the lines between hierarchies and different relations of power. He could use his high-profile position to secure economic resources for Yerevan from Moscow, but he could just as easily work alongside Armenian leaders to devise plans for expanding greenspace in Lori, as if he were a local official working among other local officials. In this sense, the common effort by Mikoyan and his network to build socialism in the republic is much more evocative of the multiethnic “mobilizational state” model argued by Adeeb Khalid, i.e., a modern state that seeks to “actively shape its citizenry” and transform society through various means.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 3. For Lieven’s discussion of the concepts of empire, see pages 3-26.

<sup>16</sup> Suny and Kivelson, *Russia’s Empires*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Adeeb Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 231-251. Khalid also makes this case in the introduction of his *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

As this chapter will explore, Mikoyan took on two roles in his activities for Armenia, both of which served to cultivate his Armenian network. These roles consisted of (a) the advocate, supporting the Soviet Armenian government and lobbying for its interests in Moscow, and (b) the advisor, offering ideas to Soviet Armenian leaders and input for improvements in the republic. This chapter also examines the popular receptions that greeted Mikoyan during his visits to Armenia, highlighting the interplay between the top-down efforts of the Soviet state to project power and the bottom-up celebrations of Mikoyan as an Armenian national figure. Finally, it analyzes the limits of Mikoyan's patronage network in relation to the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh.

### **Mikoyan as Advocate**

As an advocate for Armenia and his Armenian network, Mikoyan personally intervened on behalf of Yerevan in Moscow, acting as a lobbyist, especially if the republic needed funds for large infrastructure projects. In these endeavors, Mikoyan worked closely with the Armenian leadership, constantly consulting with them, and forging a collaborative relationship toward the common aim of promoting the economic development of the republic. No evidence exists suggesting that Mikoyan derailed any projects proposed by the Armenian government. In fact, available evidence suggests that he consistently supported Yerevan on all projects, although, as this chapter will also show, he did offer feedback and input, which the Armenian authorities solicited and welcomed. In most cases, Mikoyan was successful in securing this support for Yerevan, and his role as an advocate for his Armenian network in the Kremlin was enhanced by his close ties with

Khrushchev.<sup>19</sup> It was in this environment that Mikoyan was able to persuade high Kremlin officials to support various projects for which Yerevan needed Moscow's assistance. "What did Mikoyan do for his homeland? A lot!" recalled Ter-Ghazaryants. "Of course, he did not do it for show... In some cases, on his own initiative, he was the first to speak with Khrushchev, which made our job easier."<sup>20</sup>

In many cases, Soviet Armenian leaders penned official requests for assistance directly to Mikoyan. For example, in July 1957, Kochinyan sent a letter to Mikoyan requesting that the Soviet Ministry of Higher Education increase the number of students admitted to the Physics and Mathematics Department of Yerevan State University. The request was connected to the growth of scientific institutes in the republic and the need for trained specialists to work in them.<sup>21</sup> In another case, on July 3, 1958, Kochinyan wrote to Mikoyan, underscoring Armenia's great need for more trucks and transportation vehicles. The poor state of transportation led to "untimely deliveries of goods to distribution networks in major industrial centers," he wrote. As a result, Kochinyan requested the allocation of 200 trucks, 25 specialized vehicles for transporting food products, and 30 Moskvich station wagons.<sup>22</sup> Upon receiving Kochinyan's request on July 14, Mikoyan forwarded it to G. V. Perov, First Deputy Chairman of Gosplan, for consideration.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In an interview with this author, Sergei Khrushchev noted the following about his father's working relationship with Mikoyan: "Mikoyan was very wise. He was seen [by my father] as the good advisor, as the 'wise Armenian' who advised Khrushchev. My father talked with him about everything. He was an honest person who would oppose your views with his. He would disagree, carefully and diplomatically, but he could say to my father 'no, you see Nikita, I think that it's something different' or 'you're not right' and so on." (Sergei Khrushchev, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Cranston, RI, May 3, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Sergo A. Mikoyan, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu [Anastas Mikoyan – A Life Devoted to the People]" (unpublished manuscript, Autumn 2009), typescript, 671.

<sup>21</sup> HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 53, l. 35.

<sup>22</sup> HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 67, ll. 25-26.

<sup>23</sup> HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 67, l. 24.

Kochinyan could also count on Mikoyan to serve as the patron for large-scale economic projects in their native Lori region. For Mikoyan, the commitment to Lori was personal. The forested northern Armenian province was his “little homeland” in the words of Ter-Ghazaryants.<sup>24</sup> He demonstrated a consistent concern for conditions there and regularly visited his native village of Sanahin and the associated city of Alaverdi, which eventually annexed the village.<sup>25</sup> For instance, Mikoyan played a key role in the “reconstruction, expansion and renovation” of the Alaverdi Copper Smelter, a major source of employment for the district’s local economy.<sup>26</sup> During his 1954 visit to Armenia, Mikoyan, together with Kochinyan and Tovmasyan, met with the plant’s director, A. Sargsyan to discuss its progress and inquire about its needs. Sargsyan requested that Mikoyan appeal directly to Moscow for support on several issues, including: (1) increasing the plant’s production levels to those of 1953; (2) requesting the re-opening of the Lenin Mine, which had been closed since 1944, in order to access ore for the production of black copper; (3) the construction of an enrichment plant at Shamlugh, another area rich in ore; (4) the construction of gas traps at the plant to reduce gas emissions and prevent sulfur dioxide exposure into the environment; and finally (5) continued state investment into the plant’s cement factory.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Sergo A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane* [My Father Anastas Mikoyan], trans. Eduard Avagyan and Svetlana Avagyan (Yerevan: Nairi, 2007), 182.

<sup>25</sup> In his memoirs, Mikoyan’s son Sergo recalled that his father was “always visiting his native village” but that he also “regretted that Alaverdi had grown so much that it actually ‘swallowed up’ Sanahin.” However, he “would explain that the city had no place to spread.” (S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 121.) Elaborating on the expansion of Alaverdi into Sanahin, Astsatryan wrote: “There was no room for new construction in the narrow valley of Alaverdi. Therefore, in order to create environmentally friendly living conditions for the population, the National Economic Council and the State Construction Committee decided to build further housing as well as cultural and other civic facilities in Alaverdi on the Sanahin Plateau, next to Mikoyan’s native village.” (Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 75.)

<sup>26</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 182.

<sup>27</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 7-8.

These concerns were duly noted by Mikoyan and the Armenian leadership, and Mikoyan was particularly concerned about the issue of pollution produced by the plant. “It is necessary to take seriously the issue of sulfur dioxide gas traps in Alaverdi,” he noted to Kochinyan.<sup>28</sup> According to Ter-Ghazaryants, Mikoyan used his influence with Khrushchev to facilitate approval for the expansion and development of the Alaverdi Copper Smelter in subsequent years.<sup>29</sup> By the time of his 1962 visit, the plant’s production capacity had been greatly expanded.<sup>30</sup> While Mikoyan was visiting Sanahin in 1962 with Zarobyan, Kochinyan, and Astsatryan, Alaverdi’s First Secretary Stepanyan and Smelter Director Sargsyan “acquainted the visitors with the plans for the expansion and reconstruction of the factory, and discussed the prospects for the development of the town.”<sup>31</sup> Astsatryan recalled that “while he was getting acquainted with the combine, the chemical plant, and the suburbs in detail, Mikoyan provided us with a number of tips on improving the surrounding environment and riverside and hillside areas.”<sup>32</sup>

Another Lori project – the large acetate silk plant in Kirovakan (Vanadzor) – also had the support and patronage of Mikoyan. During his 1962 visit, after a short stop at Armenia’s second largest city, Leninakan (Gyumri), Mikoyan and his entourage arrived in Kirovakan to inspect the factory.<sup>33</sup> Seven days before the visit, in a letter dated March 8, 1962, Viktor Fedorov, the Chairman of the Soviet State Committee of the Council of Ministers for Chemistry, informed Zarobyan that he had notified Mikoyan about the construction and launch of the new plant.<sup>34</sup> Built with modern British equipment, it was

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<sup>28</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 20.

<sup>29</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 182.

<sup>30</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 75.

<sup>31</sup> “Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii,” March 16, 1962, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 75.

<sup>33</sup> “Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii,” March 16, 1962, 1.

<sup>34</sup> HAA f. 1, op. 41, d. 130, l. 4.

proclaimed by *Kommunist* as Armenia's largest contribution to Khrushchev's ambitious Seven Year Plan (1958-1965), intended to bolster light industry in the USSR.<sup>35</sup> "Another similar factory," recalled Astsatryan, "was under construction in Engels, Russia [near Saratov], where the English side was complaining to the Soviet Foreign Trade Ministry about the slow pace of its operations."<sup>36</sup> At the plant, Mikoyan and his associates carefully examined the machines and workshops. "Anastas Ivanovich expressed a desire to become acquainted with the construction of the plant on the spot and with many installation specialists, including the English supervisor," noted Astsatryan.<sup>37</sup> The group listened to the explanations of factory director L. Akhnazarov, and Mikoyan chatted in English with visiting British specialists in the factory's spinning shop.<sup>38</sup> After inspecting the progress of the factory, the entourage visited the city of Kirovakan, where they were greeted by a large crowd that included schoolchildren, *kolkhozniki*, and workers.<sup>39</sup>

"In Kirovakan, Mikoyan became thoroughly acquainted with many unusual manufacturing sites, auxiliary economies, and the pace of the assembly of technological equipment," recalled Astsatryan. "Listening with interest to all parties, Mikoyan was very pleased to hear that the construction and assembly work was proceeding within the planned schedule." He added that Mikoyan "did not hide his joy" that "in Lori's scarce conditions many large and state-of-the-art factories were being built and successfully operated."<sup>40</sup> Mikoyan's interest in the plant continued even after his visit. On August 3, 1962, Fedorov wrote to Mikoyan that construction of the plant was lagging behind schedule. In response,

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<sup>35</sup> "Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii", March 16, 1962, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> "Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii," March 16, 1962, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 67.



on August 11, Mikoyan forwarded the letter to Kochinyan and the heads of the Soviet Ministry of Construction of Power Plants (Novikkov), the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR (Iasnov), and the Gosplan (Vasilensko). “Take action on this matter and report on the results at once,” he wrote to them.<sup>41</sup>

Developments in Kirovakan were linked to other projects involving Mikoyan in Armenia, notably the Yerevan Polyvinyl Acetate Plant. The Yerevan plant was one of the first in the entire country that did not use food ethanol in the production of acetic acid. During his 1962 trip, Mikoyan visited the plant with Zarobyan, Kochinyan, and Astsatryan and was given a “hearty welcome” by the workers. The welcome included bouquets of flowers from the female employees, shouts of “ura!”, and even Caucasian toasts in honor of their guest. Mikoyan spoke with the workers and “inspected the equipment of the workshop where polyvinyl butyral film is produced.” *Kommunist* reported that “he was interested in the production process, the technical and economic specifics of the enterprise, and the life and well-being of the workers and employees.”<sup>42</sup> However, behind the pleasantries, the real purpose of the visit, as recalled by Astsatryan, was that “one of the raw materials used in the Kirovakan acetate silk plant – acetyl-cellulose – was to be produced at a special production site under construction at the Yerevan Polyvinyl Acetate Plant, the equipment for which we had not yet received from the Gorky region and was expected to be arriving eventually.”<sup>43</sup>

During the visit, Mikoyan promised the Armenian leadership that he would “take measures to ensure the delivery of the equipment on time and send it to Yerevan. At the

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<sup>41</sup> HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 152, ll. 5-7.

<sup>42</sup> “Prebivaniie tov. A. I. Mikoyana v Armenii” [“The Stay of Comrade A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia”], *Kommunist*, March 15, 1962, 4. See also GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 68.

same time, he said that if the equipment was not prepared in a timely manner, then the Soviet government would help the situation for some time by importing the raw material from abroad.”<sup>44</sup> In the end, the latter scenario prevailed. “Since the Gorky Machine Factory did not manage to produce the technological equipment in a timely manner and the Kirovakan plant was put into operation in time,” noted Astsatryan, “we had to buy acetylcellulose from France until it was completed by the Polyvinyl Acetate Plant, for the production of machinery for that material.”<sup>45</sup> At the time of Mikoyan’s 1962 visit, French advisors were already present at the Yerevan plant and Mikoyan even chatted with them.<sup>46</sup>

Mikoyan also served as Yerevan’s patron for the Arzni-Shamiram canal, another significant part of Armenia’s contribution to the Seven Year Plan. Construction of that project commenced in 1958 and Mikoyan, together with Tovmasyan, Kochinyan, and Armenian Supreme Soviet Chairman Shmavon Arushanyan, even inspected the canal site during his visit to the republic in March of that year.<sup>47</sup> Workers at the *kolkhozes* of Yeghvard, Ashtarak, Getamej, and Kanaker worked to clear stones for the cultivation of the Yeghvard plain. However, the task proved too daunting for them, and Zarobyan’s Soviet Armenian government turned to Moscow for assistance. Kochinyan wrote to the Soviet Food Industry Ministry, headed by Vasilii Zotov. He outlined the plan of the canal, which would envision cultivating 10,000 hectares of land and requested financial support. In response, Zotov dispatched a commission to Armenia to investigate the feasibility of the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Prebivaniie tov. A. I. Mikoyana v Armenii”, 4. See also GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Notably, on the same day, Mikoyan also inspected other large Armenian infrastructure projects, inspecting the canal as well as the new Yerevan bridge, the Arzni Hydroelectric Power Station, and the Kotayk vineyard irrigation system. For the itinerary of Mikoyan’s March 1958 visit, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1337, ll. 1-3.

proposal. Finding the land unsuitable for cultivation, Moscow denied Yerevan the funds it needed for the canal project.<sup>48</sup>

Undeterred, Soviet Armenian officials decided to take their proposal to Mikoyan. In Moscow, Kochinyan met with Mikoyan and spoke to him with great enthusiasm about the first phase of the canal's construction and its successful results. He showed him a map of the area, highlighting the future cultivation of gardens in its vicinity. Mikoyan observed the map carefully and expressed skepticism. "You have a surprisingly vivid imagination!" he said. "I see some exaggeration here. I know all of these areas well. When I was there in the 1920s, I could never walk through this land on foot. It is a perfect desert. It will take a long time to cultivate this area and even then, our techniques have still not been perfected. For now, though, the biggest issue is that it is very difficult to allocate funds for such a project."<sup>49</sup> Kochinyan promised Mikoyan that if funds were allocated to the project then, during his next trip to Armenia, Mikoyan would observe that the highway between Yerevan and Ashtarak would already be completely green. It was on this condition that Mikoyan agreed to intervene on Yerevan's behalf and speak about the matter to Zotov personally. After speaking with Mikoyan, Zotov agreed to meet with Kochinyan again. However, again the commission denied funding for Yerevan's plan and Kochinyan needed to modify the proposal to include the areas of Zovuni, Ashtarak, Proshyan, Nor Hachn, and Basakh. After Yerevan made these modifications, the ministry accepted the plan and allocated the funds to commence construction work on the canal.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Anton Kochinyan, *Anavart husher* [Unfinished Memoirs], ed. Vladimir Petrosyan (Yerevan: Heghinakayin hratarakutyun, 2008), 394.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 357 and 393-394.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

Four years later, on the first day of his visit to Armenia in 1962, Mikoyan asked his hosts “It is possible to go to Ashtarak? I have not seen it in a long time. Perhaps much has changed.” Kochinyan recalled that he “immediately guessed” that he wanted to see the progress of the canal project.<sup>51</sup> On the next day, Mikoyan and his entourage set out for the town of Lusavan.<sup>52</sup> Upon greeting a crowd of Armenian *kolkhozniki*, workers, and schoolchildren, the group toured the large Lusavan Machine Tool Factory, another Armenian contribution to the Seven Year Plan. After meeting with the factory director, the plant designer, and the workers, Mikoyan praised the growth of the Lusavan factory as the “largest factory of its kind in Transcaucasia.”<sup>53</sup> Afterwards, the group drove to the orchards of Ashtarak, Proshyan and Zhovuni cultivated by the Arzni-Shamiram canal. Mikoyan told the driver to stop the car and he got out to inspect the lands closely and meet with the students affiliated with the Yerevan Agricultural Institute who were cultivating them. Mikoyan was genuinely impressed by what he observed. He wished the students “success in their respectable business from the bottom of his heart and said that they can be proud that they have revived lands that were barren for centuries.”<sup>54</sup>

Back in Yerevan, Mikoyan took Kochinyan aside. “When you told me about the plan for the Arzni-Shamiram canal, I did not believe you,” he told him. “I always wait to see and make sure. A great deal of work has been done! These are really wonderful gardens.”<sup>55</sup> According to Kochinyan, “Mikoyan’s questioning of the second phase of the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>52</sup> This city was later renamed Charentsavan on September 23, 1967 (see HAA f. 207, op. 60, d. 57, ll. 47-48). In his memoir, Sergo Mikoyan wrote that this toponym alteration was encouraged by his father (see S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 113).

<sup>53</sup> “Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii” [“Comrade A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia”], *Kommunist*, March 13, 1962, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 358.

Arzni-Shamiram canal ceased at this point.”<sup>56</sup> However, the euphoria was short-lived. Armenia’s leadership faced yet another setback when the Soviet government inexplicably ceased funding the project. Again, the republic’s leadership appealed to Mikoyan. “The response was very quick and concrete,” Kochinyan recalled. “The magnificent canal was built and about 30,000 hectares of rocky lands became irrigated and the best grape and orchard gardens in the country were planted there.”<sup>57</sup>

In a later project, in 1968, Kochinyan (by then the First Secretary of Armenia) initiated work on the second stage of the Talin Canal, which received water from the Akhuryan Reservoir that defines a portion of the border between Armenia and Turkey. The canal would work to support five new Armenian *sovkhoses*. For this, Kochinyan need funding from the Food Industry Ministry and had to contact Zotov. At first, Kochinyan’s meeting with Zotov was very warm and cordial. However, just as Zotov was about to approve the project, the head of the agriculture department handed photos to him showing the dry and stony landscape of the Talin raion. The photographs were the result of an earlier Soviet ministry study of Talin after Armenia’s Food Minister, Aram Piruzyan, requested funds for developing *sovkhoses* in the area. Although Zotov deemed the project a “senseless” and “unprofitable” undertaking, he nevertheless agreed to meet Kochinyan again.<sup>58</sup> Kochinyan then visited Mikoyan and discussed the matter with him. Mikoyan smiled and rhetorically asked “where are there no stones in Armenia?” He personally assured Kochinyan that he would speak directly to Zotov about the matter. The next day, Kochinyan met with Zotov, equipped with data and economic justifications from Yerevan.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 231.

Expecting the worst, Kochinyan was pleased to see that the Zotov was congenial and receptive. As he learned from Zotov, Mikoyan had already spoken directly to him about the matter, assuring him of its potential. “Anastas Ivanovich told me that in Armenia it is impossible to find a place without stones,” Zotov told Kochinyan. “If there is sun and water, then the Armenian peasant can work wonders!”<sup>59</sup>

Armenian state officials also took advantage of Mikoyan’s trips to Armenia to visibly demonstrate the republic’s needs. One such example was recounted by Astsatryan from Mikoyan’s trip to the southern Armenian region of Syunik during his 1962 visit. On the road to Kajaran, Kochinyan suggested that the entourage stop near the Voghji Hydroelectric Power Station, by a series of newly constructed buildings on the Voghji riverbank. The buildings housed a boarding school for 8-10 graders that would soon serve the whole Kapan raion. Astsatryan then asked Mikoyan, “Anastas Ivanovich, please be our supreme judge. Which peasant in Armenia would agree to send his child to study at this secondary school, built in this uninhabited valley for three years? And this is when there are secondary schools in many neighboring villages!” He suggested “providing national support to these three buildings” and that “in the short term, we will build additional necessary structures, run a trolleybus line to Kapan, and set up a modern machine factory where 2-3,000 young people from Kapan will work.” Astsatryan stressed that if such a plan were realized, the locals “would not have to leave our republic in search of work.” However, he noted the disagreement of the all-Union Council of Ministers. In response, Mikoyan said, “I fully agree with you and I will become your state advocate. I will look for supporters and find a positive solution to the problem.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 232-233.

<sup>60</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 72-73.

However, nowhere was Mikoyan's patronage for Yerevan more apparent than in his efforts to help Soviet Armenian leaders realize the Arpa-Sevan Canal project, in which Mikoyan "played a decisive role" in the words of Ter-Ghazaryants.<sup>61</sup> The largest lake in the Caucasus, Sevan is one of the three major lakes of the Armenian plateau, alongside Lake Van in present-day Turkey and Lake Urmia in present-day Iran. During the Stalin era, its waters were harnessed by the Soviet government for hydroelectric and irrigation projects. The result was a gradual diminution of the lake's waters, resulting in a significant ecological crisis. Water levels decreased to such an extent that the Sevan Island became a peninsula. "The lake is disappearing from its stone basin," wrote visiting Soviet writer Vasilii Grossman in 1962. "Armenia, awash with electric light, grieves for Lake Sevan, which is perishing."<sup>62</sup> After Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet Armenian officials began regularly discussing potential solutions to the Sevan problem. Finally, the republic's leaders agreed on the construction of the Arpa-Sevan Canal, which would divert water from the Arpa River into the lake. However, such an ambitious project could not be funded by the Armenian state budget alone and assistance from Moscow was necessary. In order to obtain such assistance on such a substantial undertaking, the Soviet Armenian leadership had to take their request to Khrushchev. They turned to Mikoyan for support and consultation for their cause.

"He examined our proposals and gave us recommendations on ways to make them pass," recalled Ter-Ghazaryants. The aim of the Armenian officials was to ensure that the

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<sup>61</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu," 671.

<sup>62</sup> Vasily Grossman, *An Armenian Sketchbook*, trans. Robert and Elizabeth Chandler (New York: NYRB Classics, 2013), 49.

“necessary funds would be allocated from the Soviet state budget to the construction of the Arpa-Sevan Canal.” The cost was not cheap:

A lot of funds were needed for constructing a tunnel of this length. Anastas Ivanovich advised us to exclude from our requests the costs of the associated infrastructure, such as the construction of roads, substations, cabling, and more. Some of us objected: you cannot build a tunnel without infrastructure! ‘In fact,’ answered Mikoyan, ‘these matters will be decided by themselves once a decision on the construction of the Arpa-Sevan Canal is adopted. After all, you cannot build a tunnel without a road. And then, all the other expenses will have to be approved, otherwise the decision will impossible to fulfill. In addition, let the republic take up a portion of the costs, say, 30%. This act will help you achieve your main goal, which is the adoption of a resolution by the Council of Ministers and the allocation of funds from the Union budget. And then it will be possible to solve all other issues.’<sup>63</sup>

Mikoyan’s advice would turn out to be correct. In May 1961, Khrushchev arrived for a state visit in Armenia to commemorate the republic’s Sovietization. Although Khrushchev expressed an interest in having Mikoyan accompany him on the trip, his friend politely declined. “It will be better for Khrushchev [to go alone],” he said.<sup>64</sup> Sevan was to be one of the main items on Khrushchev’s itinerary and Armenian First Secretary Zarobyan hoped to use this visit to better acquaint the Soviet leader with the problem and to ask Moscow for assistance. On the morning of Soviet Victory Day (May 9), Khrushchev departed with the Armenian leadership from Yerevan to the lake in an open car.<sup>65</sup> Marshal Hovhannes (Ivan) Baghramyan, a friend of Mikoyan, joined them.<sup>66</sup> Upon arrival, the jovial Khrushchev was delighted to see the blue Sevan. “When Khrushchev saw the beauty of

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<sup>63</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn’, otdannaia narodu,” 671-672.

<sup>64</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 182.

<sup>65</sup> “Prebivaniie N. S. Khrushcheva v Armenii” [“The Stay of N. S. Khrushchev in Armenia”], *Kommunist*, May 10, 1961, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Baghramyan can also be seen in the footage of the trip in the documentary film *Tsntsum e Hayastane* [Armenia Rejoices], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1961).



the lake,” noted Zarobyan’s son, Nikita. “He could not cease to admire it.”<sup>67</sup> Khrushchev and his hosts then inspected the underground power station of the Sevan Hydroelectric Power Plant of the Sevan-Hrazdan Cascade. After the inspection, Khrushchev “lingered in the yard” and chatted with a few workers before he and his entourage departed for the lakeshore where the boat “Mikoyan” was waiting for them.<sup>68</sup>

Everything appeared to be going smoothly for the Armenian leadership. However, an issue arose that nearly derailed Zarobyan’s hopes for a successful meeting. Khrushchev hoped to be met with a reception at Sevan, but there were no restaurants or cafes along the lakeshore to host such a reception. To accommodate Khrushchev, the Soviet Armenian leadership decided to organize a dinner on Mikoyan’s old boat on the lake. However, when Zarobyan informed Khrushchev that they would be dining on the boat, the Soviet First Secretary became very angry. “Why are there are no rest homes, restaurants, and health resorts on the shores of such a beautiful lake?” Khrushchev asked incredulously.<sup>69</sup> Zarobyan called over Kochinyan. “It is enough if I say,” Kochinyan recalled, “that I almost heard Khrushchev curse when asking why no resort had been built on Sevan. ‘No, I will not break bread on Mikoyan’s ship,’ he said. However, we managed to persuade him to join us, and we welcomed him on the boat. It was an unforgettable day.”<sup>70</sup>

On the boat, the party dined on barbecued Sevan *ishkhan* trout with Armenian cognac, as local boaters greeted them from Sevan’s waters. Back in Moscow, Khrushchev had been forbidden by doctors’ orders to imbibe in alcoholic beverages, but with the

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<sup>67</sup> Nikita Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha* [Yakov Zarobyan and His Era] (Yerevan: Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University (RAU), 2008), 79.

<sup>68</sup> “Prebivaniie N. S. Khrushcheva v Armenii,” 1.

<sup>69</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 390-391.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

Armenian cognac at Sevan, he made an exception.<sup>71</sup> The meeting on the boat lasted for over two hours. In his appeals to Khrushchev, Zarobyan's case was aided by the lake's natural beauty:

Of course, Khrushchev knew the history of the lake. We did not think that he was so naïve and to simply agree to march on a boat just to admire Sevan. When we arrived in the center of the lake, he looked at the water, admired its purity, and was surprised that it was so fresh. He remarked about how wonderful, clean, and fresh the water was. I lost no time in knowing what I needed to do to make an impression. However, just as I was thinking about that, Khrushchev smiled and dropped a 10-kopek coin into the water. The coin slowly sank down to the bottom of the lake. We were in the deepest part of Sevan and we could see the coin sinking clearly. The Great Secretary exclaimed like a child: 'See how clean the water of this lake is! I can see the coin!'<sup>72</sup>

Zarobyan seized moment and spoke to Khrushchev respectfully but directly. "The lake is dying," he said, "and, if you do not take urgent measures to save it, then it will dry up by 80% and turn into a swamp after only a few years."<sup>73</sup> The Armenian leadership also pointed out to Khrushchev a cliff where they noted the previous water level.<sup>74</sup> Khrushchev became indignant. "Would not the capitalists be the ones to destroy such a beautiful, freshwater lake?" Zarobyan then responded, "Of course, no communist would tolerate the loss of this lake, but what can we do if the authorities do not allow us to save and cherish it?"<sup>75</sup> Zarobyan and the others outlined the details of the Arpa-Sevan project and emphasized the

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<sup>71</sup> Ruben Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum: Mard, k'aghak'atsi, petakan gortsich'* [Yakov Zarobyan in My Memories: Person, Citizen, Statesman] (Yerevan: Evroprint, 2007), 11-12. Footage of the boat excursion, including the ishkan feast, can be seen in the documentary *Tsntsum e Hayastane* [Armenia Rejoices], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1961).

<sup>72</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 12.

<sup>73</sup> Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha*, 79. In his memoirs, Yeghishe Astsatryan recalled that Zarobyan raised the issue of Sevan's diminution to Khrushchev earlier, as the party arrived in Sevan and first caught a glimpse of the lake (see Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 169.).

<sup>74</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu," 672.

<sup>75</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 12.

“extreme importance of building an underground canal for the transfer of water from the Arpa River to Sevan.”<sup>76</sup>

However, as Mikoyan foresaw, Khrushchev was concerned about the cost of an undertaking that was “a multi-million, 500 million, or half a billion-ruble project, perhaps even more costly.”<sup>77</sup> As Ter-Ghazaryants recounted:

We told him that there was only one way to save the lake: to build the Arpa-Sevan Canal. However, the republic cannot accomplish this task on its own. We need money from the Union budget. At first, Khrushchev was horrified by the figures for the tunnel construction costs. Then, when we said, on Mikoyan’s advice, that we would incur only a third of the expenses, he calmed down a bit. ‘Well, then, that’s another thing, then I think we can help you,’ said Nikita Sergeevich. We explained that if you do not build a canal, then there will be a swamp instead of a lake. And then there will be no water for the irrigation of the valley that harvests grapes, fruits and vegetables. This convinced him – Anastas Ivanovich warned him about this situation, and here he saw everything with his own eyes. And so, Sevan was saved.<sup>78</sup>

Impressed, Khrushchev promised the Armenian leadership that Moscow would help the project. The next day, at a mass gathering at Yerevan’s Dinamo (today Republican) Stadium, Khrushchev delivered a speech in which he spoke with great warmth for the “brotherly Armenians” amid a backdrop of vibrant red banners.<sup>79</sup> When he referred to the Arpa-Sevan project, he received thunderous applause from the audience. The flattered Khrushchev was beaming, “as if he personally saved Sevan.” He became an instant hero to the Armenians and “received unprecedented respect and love for his ‘generous decision’.”<sup>80</sup> “As for that quotation from the newspapers about Khrushchev being the

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<sup>76</sup> Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha*, 79.

<sup>77</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, “Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn’, otdannaia narodu,” 672.

<sup>79</sup> A shortened version of the speech can be seen in the film *Tsntsum e Hayastane* [Armenia Rejoices], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1961).

<sup>80</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 13.

‘great and sincere friend of the Armenian people,’” recalled Nikita Zarobyan, “I think this was also not far from the truth. Of the decisions that my father put forward to Khrushchev, there was practically not a single one that he did not decide in the interests of Armenia.”<sup>81</sup> Mikoyan later recounted to Zarobyan that Khrushchev had told him “I never imagined that such a heroic and totally loyal people lived in this mountainous, semi-arid country!”<sup>82</sup>

Three months later, in August 1961, when Zarobyan called Khrushchev to check on the status of the Arpa-Sevan project, “he received the expected answer.” Zarobyan then flew to Moscow, where, on August 29, the Soviet Council of Ministers approved funding for the Arpa-Sevan Canal. “Yakov, all roads are secured,” Khrushchev told Zarobyan, before he finally signed the construction permit.<sup>83</sup> The following month, delegates at the XXII Armenian Party Congress praised Khrushchev. They noted “with great satisfaction and gratitude” the assistance that the First Secretary “personally provided to the republic in connection with confronting drought, solving the Sevan problem, building the Akhuryan reservoir, resolving the issue of the return of Armenians to their homeland and other important questions that contribute to the further flourishing of the republic’s economy.”<sup>84</sup>

Mikoyan also lauded Khrushchev for his response to the Sevan issue. During his 1962 visit to Armenia, Mikoyan delivered a speech at the Yerevan Opera Theatre on March 14.<sup>85</sup> In his speech, Mikoyan focused on the major successes of Armenia in the context of Khrushchev’s Seven Year Plan and touched on Soviet foreign policy matters. However, the highlight of the speech was the opening in which he praised Khrushchev’s decisive role

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<sup>81</sup> Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha*, 77.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>83</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 13.

<sup>84</sup> RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 164, l. 73.

<sup>85</sup> “Iarkaia demonstratsiia nerushimogo edinstva partii i naroda” [“Vivid Demonstration of the Indestructible Unity of the Party and the People”], *Kommunist*, March 15, 1962, 1.

in resolving the Sevan question with the approval of the Arpa-Sevan project. Significantly, the drafts of Mikoyan's speech show that he was most concerned with revising and properly preparing this portion of the address.<sup>86</sup> To make his point directly to his audience, Mikoyan delivered the opening of the speech in Armenian.<sup>87</sup>

“As a result of Comrade Khrushchev's trip to Armenia,” he told his audience, “a number of economic issues that were raised by your leadership and your scientists have been resolved. Among them was the issue of measures to support the restoration of the waters of Lake Sevan to a level close to the natural one, a matter of public concern in Armenia.” He added: “I bring you greetings from the Central Committee of our Party, from the Government of the Soviet Union. It is with great pleasure that I fulfill the instruction of Nikita Sergeevich to convey his heartfelt greetings to all Armenian friends and to all workers of Armenia.”<sup>88</sup> Mikoyan went on to praise “new world-historical victories” and strides that the country had made under his friend's leadership, including de-Stalinization and the defeat of the anti-Party group. These statements served to bolster the renewed anti-Stalinist campaign, in view of the recent XXII Party Congress. “Having resolutely overcome the harmful consequences of the cult of personality and having defeated the anti-Party group, the Party carried out a number of revolutionary measures in many areas of the country's social life, in its economy, science, and culture,” Mikoyan said. “N. S. Khrushchev played an outstanding role in these developments.”<sup>89</sup> Notably, in an

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<sup>86</sup> For the drafts of Mikoyan's speech, and specifically the opening with his praise for Khrushchev, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, ll. 91-92 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1722, ll. 1-2, 39-40, and 42-43. Notably, in earlier drafts, Mikoyan specifically mentioned the role of the Arpa River in the process of replenishing Sevan.

<sup>87</sup> For the Armenian language drafts of the opening of Mikoyan's speech, see GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1722, ll. 111-112 and 114-116.

<sup>88</sup> “Rech' tovarishcha A. I. Mikoyana” [“Speech of Comrade A.I. Mikoyan”], *Kommunist*, March 15, 1962, 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

early draft of his speech, Mikoyan almost decided against including this specific part of his praise for Khrushchev. His hesitation may have been conditioned by the local Caucasus context and the sensitivity in neighboring Georgia toward the de-Stalinization issue. One year earlier, this same issue informed First Secretary Zaroabyan's decision to move cautiously on the removal of Stalin's statue from Yerevan's Victory Park.<sup>90</sup> However, in the end, Mikoyan must have felt that the local situation was stable enough that he did not need to refrain from mentioning the struggle against Stalin's personality cult. Therefore, he re-added the text again at the last moment in the final draft of his speech.<sup>91</sup>

In a later trip to Armenia, Mikoyan visited Sevan again, accompanied by Kochinyan and Astsatryan. As Mikoyan observed the lake, Kochinyan highlighted the new developments along its coasts as well as the forestation efforts in its vicinity. Although pleased by these developments, Mikoyan was "particularly interested in the work done to maintain the lake level." Both Kochinyan and Astsatryan informed him about the significant progress that had been made to save the lake, especially since the realization of the Arpa-Sevan Canal. At Mikoyan's request, they also visited the "satellite" cities of Abovyan, Charentsavan, and Hrazdan.<sup>92</sup> Mikoyan demonstrated consistent support for the Sevan project even after his retirement, in his visits to Armenia in 1966 and 1970, when he went to inspect the canal construction personally. During his 1966 visit, he examined it both in Jermuk and in Martuni near the shores of Sevan (i.e., from both the Arpa River and Lake Sevan sides).<sup>93</sup> Mikoyan, accompanied by Kochinyan, Badal Muradyan (by then the Chairman of Armenia's Council of Ministers), and Ter-Ghazaryants, also took a boat trip

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<sup>90</sup> Zaroabyan, *Yakov Zaroabyan i ego epokha*, 92-93

<sup>91</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1722, l. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 70-71.

<sup>93</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 342, l. 3.

to the Sevan Island (already a peninsula).<sup>94</sup> He traveled to Sevan once again on his final, recorded visit to Armenia as part of his trip marking the 50th anniversary of Soviet Armenia on December 1, 1970, just days before his brother, Artem, passed away on December 9.<sup>95</sup>

Mikoyan not only received appeals from the Soviet Armenian leadership. He also took into consideration complaints from locals about the need for resources from Moscow. For instance, during his 1954 trip, Mikoyan visited an aluminum plant in Yerevan that had just been completed in the postwar years. The director of the plant noted to Mikoyan that the factory could produce several times more high-purity aluminum than it did. However, he complained that the Soviet Ministry of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy planned to produce it in insignificant quantities and asked Mikoyan to intercede.<sup>96</sup> Mikoyan likewise listened to complaints from workers about poor housing, asking him to intervene on their behalf. One worker complained that “he was working at the aluminum plant for three years and that he still only lived in a hostel, even though he had a large family, including a wife, child, mother, and father.”<sup>97</sup> There were also apparently housing complaints in the village of Gyumush (Karenis) near the newly completed Gyumush Hydroelectric Power Station. In response, Mikoyan advised Armenian officials to “build houses for teachers, doctors, and intellectuals” in the village, apparently envisioning such homes to be adorned with balconies because, as he remarked, “there was no need to build a house without balconies.”<sup>98</sup> These problems were not unique to Gyumush, Yerevan, or Armenia generally. As scholar Steven Harris has written, housing shortages in the postwar Soviet

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 342, l. 12.

<sup>96</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 2.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 17.

Union were “extreme” and “most urban dwellers continued to live in barracks, dormitories, and communal apartments, as they had before the war.”<sup>99</sup>

While visiting a Yerevan watch factory on the same 1954 trip, Mikoyan was informed by the factory’s director that the Soviet Ministry of Medium Engineering “was not allocating the necessary investments” for the expansion of the factory and for housing construction for the workers. The factory also produced wooden-framed alarm clocks, but “the Ministry restricted its distribution, citing a lack of demand.” In response, Mikoyan instructed Armenian officials “to find ways to correct the situation.”<sup>100</sup> During the same visit, Mikoyan also inspected a worsted wool factory in Yerevan. At this factory, the chief engineer noted that its capacity could be increased by 30% with the installation of additional equipment. He also “complained that the machines that arrived from Leipzig are incomplete, because they were installed at one of the existing factories in Leipzig that was bombed [during the war].” He asked Mikoyan for assistance. In response, Mikoyan advised Armenian officials to write to Kosygin.<sup>101</sup>

Mikoyan’s trips to Sanahin also afforded locals the opportunity to present their grievances directly to the Soviet statesman. During his 1954 trip to Sanahin, he, together with Tovmasyan and Kochinyan, spoke with the local citizens about the need for improvements. The *kolkhozniki* and workers with whom he met openly complained to him that “the bathhouse and premises for the cooperative were left unfinished, and that the

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<sup>99</sup> Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Washington, D.C. and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 92. Harris’s study in general provides a good overview of the Khrushchev government’s response to the housing question. Notably, postwar housing shortages were not limited to the western parts of the Soviet Union that were devastated by the war. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Mikoyan review commission found that of the 430 letters addressed to Mikoyan from Soviet Armenian citizens in the aftermath of his March 1954 speech, 184 (43%) concerned housing (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1099, l. 3).

<sup>100</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 1.

<sup>101</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 2.



government had left the apartments for teachers unrepaired.”<sup>102</sup> The chairman of the local executive committee assured the villagers and Mikoyan that “the construction of the bathhouse and the cooperative as well as the repair of the teachers’ accommodations, would all be finished in June.” The road would be “put in order” at the same time, he pledged.<sup>103</sup> In response to these issues, Mikoyan stressed to Kochinyan that “a bathhouse should be built in the Sanahin smelter, since the workers of the plant live there.”<sup>104</sup> He also counseled his Armenian colleagues, on the construction of additional amenities near the factory, including a store and a school, and further alerted them to the urgent need to pump water to the plateau of Sanahin for the villagers. In his notes, Mikoyan underscored these last points in his characteristic thick blue pencil.<sup>105</sup> He also emphasized the need to fix an existing water supply pipe to Sanahin.<sup>106</sup>

In the town of Tumanyan, 11 miles down the Debed River from Sanahin, Mikoyan also proposed increasing the capacity of the Tumanyan Factory of Refractory Brick Materials to 150 tons, based on the comments of that factory’s director. Mikoyan believed that this increase would “satisfy the full metallurgy demand of the whole Caucasus” and thereby halt the costly shipment of brick materials from faraway Leningrad and Donbas. Also, in accordance with the factory director’s recommendations, Mikoyan advised the Armenian government to build a magnesian brick plant in Sevan, due to the presence of “high-quality” raw materials necessary for brick production.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 7.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 19.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 20.

<sup>107</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 6 and 20.

In Kirovakan, on the same trip, Mikoyan met with Lieutenant General Orel, Deputy Commander of the Transcaucasian Military Okrug, “who called Mikoyan’s attention to the unsatisfactory services provided by Glavvoentorg [the Soviet General Directorate of Military Trading Enterprises] to military personnel and their families, as well as to military units in Kirovakan.” He noted that there was a “sharp lack of housing for soldiers” and no land for a shooting range. Mikoyan asked Orel to articulate “concrete measures to improve the supply through Glavvoentorg.”<sup>108</sup> Mikoyan advised his Armenian colleagues to “petition the Military Soviet to increase allocations for the construction of residential buildings for the military commander.”<sup>109</sup> As an aside, he noted to Kochinyan, “as you can see, Voentorg is not working well. You need to figure out the situation and fix it,” adding that a place for a shooting range had to be considered.<sup>110</sup>

On at least one occasion, Mikoyan even took up a local Armenian concern with an international representative. In the aftermath of Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin at the XX Party Congress, Soviet Armenian citizens, above all university students, demanded that the Kremlin take more proactive measures in response to Turkey’s 1955 Istanbul pogrom.<sup>111</sup> One student even accused Moscow of “not standing up for the rights of the Armenian people persecuted in Turkey.”<sup>112</sup> In response, Mikoyan raised the matter with

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<sup>108</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 6.

<sup>109</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 19.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> For more information on the Istanbul pogrom of September 1955, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 230-231. These events are also discussed by Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk in his portrait of Istanbul (see Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, trans. Maureen Freely (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 173-175). For a dramatized version of this event, see Kemal Yalçın, *You Rejoice My Heart*, trans. Paul Bessemer (London and Watertown, MA: Gomidas Institute and the Tekeyan Cultural Association, 2007), 277-286.

<sup>112</sup> Karl Eimermacher, ed. et al. *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kulte lichnosti Stalina na XX s’ezde KPSS: Dokumenty* [The Report of N. S. Khrushchev on the Cult of Personality of Stalin at the XX Congress: Documents], (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 554.

then US Vice-President Richard Nixon in a Moscow meeting on July 25, 1959. Amid their discussions, Mikoyan noted the issue of a “captive nations” resolution then before Congress and expressed the feeling that it was intended to disrupt relations between Washington and Moscow. In response, Nixon attempted to reassure him that President Eisenhower could not control the passage of such a resolution. Mikoyan replied that “he was an Armenian, and that although he is not active in the Government of Armenia proper, he knows some 30 Supreme Soviet Deputies of that Republic and all of them have been wondering who gave the American Government the authority to act in their behalf and why the American Government is not doing something for the liberation of really oppressed peoples, such as the Armenian minority in Turkey.”<sup>113</sup>

Sometimes leaders of local Armenian institutions would appeal directly to Mikoyan, especially if they believed that their concerns were not being addressed by the Armenian authorities. For example, A. E. Charchoghlyan, the director of the Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture, appealed directly to Mikoyan to address serious facility and housing needs for the institute. “The hopeless situation of our institute leads us to directly contact and trouble you,” he wrote, “since our repeated appeals to the legislative bodies of the republic have not yielded any results.”<sup>114</sup> At the time, the institute still did not have its own building and was limited to only 15 rooms within Yerevan’s Kirov High School. The school lacked its own dormitory and so students had to live in rented rooms. From the rent, it was only able to collect limited funds to build a dormitory but needed

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<sup>113</sup> “Historical Documents: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Volume X, Part 1, Eastern Europe Region; Soviet Union; Cyprus: Document 97. Memorandum of Conversation,” *US State Department*, July 25, 1959 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v10p1/d97> (accessed August 22, 2019).

<sup>114</sup> HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 40, l. 29. S. G. Tambiev, a candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, also wrote to Mikoyan about the institute’s needs in October 1955 and highlighted unfulfilled promises by the Soviet Armenian authorities to allocate more resources to the institute (HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 451, ll. 15-20).

greater support from the state. Charchoghlyan asked Mikoyan to oblige the Armenian Council of Ministers to allocate more school premises for the institute and, even more importantly, resources for the construction of a dormitory and a new institute building. “Dear Anastas Ivanovich,” wrote Charchoghlyan, “we have decided to contact you directly and, on behalf of our team of teachers and students, we ask that you do not leave our request without results.”<sup>115</sup> In response, Mikoyan forwarded the letter to Kochinyan, instructing him to “take action” on the matter.<sup>116</sup>

Mikoyan remained an advocate for Yerevan even after his retirement from high office in 1965. “For a long time,” wrote Kochinyan, “there was much debate over whether we were doing the right thing to create industrial enterprises in rural areas, even in large settlements. In the central bodies, especially at Gosplan, we were blamed for wasting money, not conducting the right policies, and creating industrial enterprises in remote areas and villages.”<sup>117</sup> However, after Mikoyan’s second trip to Zangezur in the late 1960s, he signaled to the Armenian leadership that he would remain a firm voice of support for Yerevan in Moscow. “Mikoyan said at our meeting in Moscow that we were doing the right thing by creating non-metallic factories to provide people with jobs in those localities,” recalled Kochinyan. “Additionally, Mikoyan well understood that we were not of the same mind even within our republic and that many of our leaders echoed the center’s mentality and hindered the organization of new initiatives.”<sup>118</sup>

Mikoyan’s role as an advocate for Armenia served to cultivate his Armenian patronage network. Through his role in lobbying Moscow on Yerevan’s behalf on key

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<sup>115</sup> HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 40, l. 30.

<sup>116</sup> HAA f. 113, op. 50, d. 40, l. 29.

<sup>117</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 403.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 403-404.

projects such as the Arpa-Sevan and Arzni-Shamiram canals, he fostered a sense of loyalty among leaders like Zarobyan, Kochinyan, and Astsatryan. They came to know and trust him through his role in helping to realize these ventures. Mikoyan's advocacy was not limited to lobbying for large-scale economic projects for which Armenian leaders needed financial backing. He also became an advocate for Armenian interests by acting to resolve complaints from local Armenian residents and technical experts on the need for resources from Moscow. Mikoyan's work with Armenian leaders to address these grievances also served to strengthen existing bonds between him and his network. He would build on his advocacy for Armenia with his dual role as the advisor, providing feedback and guidance to the Armenian leadership on various economic projects and advice on ways to frame funding proposals to all-Union bodies.

### **Mikoyan as Advisor**

In an extension of his role as an advocate for Armenia, Mikoyan also acted as an advisor, providing input and guidance to his Armenian network on various matters. These recommendations could take the form of consultations in Moscow about proposals for funding, informal conversations about forestation in Lori, or even advocacy for technological advancements in public speeches. Mikoyan's deference to the Armenian leadership, and his joint work with them, further obscured the distinction in hierarchy between the statesmen and leaders like Zarobyan, Kochinyan, and Astsatryan. In this way, as with his role as the advocate, Mikoyan's role as the advisor served to bolster his connection with his Armenian network.

Mikoyan regularly consulted with members of his network in Moscow during their visits to the Soviet capital. In such meetings, Armenian officials like Zarobyan or Kochinyan would update him about the progress on various projects in Armenia and would seek advice on how to frame funding proposals to Soviet central bodies on behalf of Yerevan. Mikoyan would not only offer advice, but also insights on the political dynamics within the Politburo and the Council of Ministers. Ter-Ghazaryants has left us with perhaps the most vivid description of such meetings, which highlight the nature of the relationship between Mikoyan and his Armenian network:

Every time we arrived [in Moscow] for a session of the all-Union Supreme Soviet, we all met with Anastas Ivanovich beforehand. These were the sessions in which the budget was to be approved and, usually, a few days before them, a plenum of the CPSU Central Committee was also convened. So, the Armenian leadership left in full force. Over the years, its composition had changed, but none of these changes had any impact on this case. We all went together to Mikoyan's dacha if it was summertime, or to his city apartment if it was winter. The first thing we did was tell him about our plans. He listened very attentively and gave advice right from the very beginning. For example, he would say 'don't ask that question because it won't work anyway,' or 'This initiative will be approved if you phrase it properly', or "Why don't you raise the question about...?". Since he knew all the ins and outs of the situation in the Politburo (then known as the Presidium of the Central Committee), and in the all-Union Council of Ministers, this kind of advice was extraordinarily valuable and useful. For the accuracy of the presentation of our proposals, in order for them to become more "passable," he called in Mikhail Sergeevich Smirtiukov. Smirtiukov was the Managing Director of the all-Union Council of Ministers. He was the guy who prepared all the government decrees and thoroughly knew all the subtleties of the Moscow bureaucracy. Mikoyan asked Smirtiukov to accept us and advise us on the best way to formulate our proposals, so that they go through the "sieve" of Gosplan [the State Planning Commission], Gossnab [the State Supply Commission], the commissions of the Supreme Soviet, and, finally, in serious cases, when it came to the big money, the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee.

Smirtiukov previously worked as an assistant to Mikoyan and respected him very much. He was on the shores of [Lake] Ladoga during the siege of Leningrad, controlling incoming goods and sending them to the blockaded city. He acted on behalf of State Defense Committee member Mikoyan, and reported everything to him by telephone every day. And so, he received us, and for a long time, he carefully worked with us. Most often, having familiarized himself with our

proposals, and after amendments and additions introduced by Mikoyan, he actually dictated to us the best formulation for articulating this or that question. Therefore, in fact, we had no misfires. Our proposals were almost always accepted without problems. And we didn't raise any "impassable" questions."<sup>119</sup>

Suren Harutyunyan, Armenia's last First Secretary, also recalled that, according to Zarobyan and Kochinyan, Mikoyan was "constantly interested in the situation in Armenia" and that he regularly "assisted in resolving economic and social issues." Specifically, Harutyunyan recalled that Zarobyan and Kochinyan "discussed the fact that [Mikoyan] was worried about the problems of Sevan as well as employment issues in villages and small towns. They said that he rejoiced at the successes in the beautification of Yerevan and housing construction in the republic. He was also proud of the achievements made in the scientific and cultural spheres."<sup>120</sup>

Although a high ranking official, Mikoyan was deferential toward Armenian leaders and even addressed them formally, as he did with Kochinyan. "One time," Kochinyan recalled, "I asked him, 'Anastas Ivanovich, is it comfortable for you to formally address someone who is younger and less significant than you?' Anastas smiled and responded, 'When you retire from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Armenia, I promise to address you informally.'"<sup>121</sup> By addressing members of his Armenian network in this way, Mikoyan was determining the nature of his relationship with them, blurring the lines of official hierarchies so characteristic of imperial systems, as defined by Burbank and Cooper. Mikoyan's rapport with his Armenian network was so close that he was even "capable of reading your thoughts from the very first word you uttered and would not let

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<sup>119</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu," 671.

<sup>120</sup> Suren Harutyunyan, *O proshlom i nastoiashem* [About the Past and the Present] (Moscow: Respublika and Sovremennik, 2009), 72.

<sup>121</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 393.

you go on and on explaining,” noted Kochinyan. “He was almost always accurate and specific.”<sup>122</sup> All parties concerned were invested in the success of Soviet Armenia’s economic development and the environment was such that ideas would be discussed and negotiated among them, rather than ordered unilaterally by Mikoyan. “It went without saying that Mikoyan, who had an exceptional memory, liked to talk to people,” recalled Kochinyan. “He liked to ask questions, get acquainted with their moods, and conditions of life. If something did not please him during the conversation, then he would repeat and reflect on it for some time.”<sup>123</sup>

Mikoyan’s meetings with his network were mutually beneficial for both sides. He was very much interested in Armenian affairs and wanted to be apprised of developments in the republic and to help Yerevan, if needed. For their part, Armenian leaders benefited from using Mikoyan as a sounding board. Yakov Zarobyan’s son, Nikita, recalled that his father discussed “pressing issues for Armenia” with Mikoyan, noting that “the solutions were connected with their consideration by the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU.” He added that for his father, “it was important to probe the possible reaction, through Mikoyan, of members of the Presidium to certain initiatives proposed by Armenia.”<sup>124</sup> Mikoyan also informed Zarobyan of discussions related to Armenia in Moscow. For instance, as part of his corn campaign, Khrushchev briefly considered the possibility of cultivating corn in the Ararat Valley.<sup>125</sup> This interest only intensified after Khrushchev’s visit to the United States and to the cornfields of Iowa in 1959. However,

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 399-400.

<sup>124</sup> Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha*, 95-96.

<sup>125</sup> “Kukuruzu—na polia Armenii!” [“Corn – To the Fields of Armenia!”], *Kommunist*, March 26, 1955, 3. For more on Khrushchev’s corn campaign, see Aaron Todd Hale-Dorrell, *Corn Crusade: Khrushchev’s Farming Revolution in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).



the campaign “did not take into account the differences in climate and soil” and although some corn was ultimately cultivated in Armenia, it only amounted to 2.3% of the total acreage of the republic by 1960.<sup>126</sup> Eventually, Khrushchev abandoned the idea for the mass cultivation of corn in Armenia. Mikoyan told Zarobyan about this change of policy on the eve of Khrushchev’s May 1961 visit. Mikoyan smiled, paused, and remarked to Zarobyan “Can you imagine what it would be like if we would have turned the Ararat Valley into a vast cornfield?”<sup>127</sup> However, although Zarobyan deeply valued his professional relationship and friendship with Mikoyan, he also sought to control the information that Mikoyan received about Armenia in their meetings.<sup>128</sup>

Some members of Mikoyan’s network met with him at his summer home in Pitsunda, in the Abkhaz ASSR of Soviet Georgia, adjacent to Khrushchev’s dacha. Meetings here were convenient for all concerned, given Abkhazia’s close proximity to Armenia. If Soviet Armenian officials happened to be on vacation near Mikoyan’s home, they would visit him to discuss Armenian affairs. For instance, while on vacation in Sochi in September 1963, Astsatryan traveled to Pitsunda, met with Mikoyan, and engaged him in long discussions on Soviet Armenian affairs. “As we drove out to lunch on a wide,

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<sup>126</sup> This amount still represented a dramatic increase in corn cultivation in Armenia (by 2.8%) compared to the yield of 1950. See Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha*, 60-61.

<sup>127</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 11.

<sup>128</sup> For instance, in one episode recalled by Sergo Mikoyan, Hrachya Kochar offered him a position in the Russian-language newspaper *Kommunist* and an opportunity to learn Armenian in the republic. Kochar’s offer to Sergo was “unexpected” and “caught him by surprise.” The job would have been a complete life and career change for Sergo, and his family would have had to relocate to Yerevan. “Do not be afraid of the difficulties,” Kochar enthusiastically told him. “Open your wings, and you will grow up like an eagle with a new, exciting life. You will not regret it.” Finally, Sergo relented. “Okay, you convinced me,” he said. However, a couple of months later, Kochar arrived in Moscow and met with Sergo and informed him that Zarobyan “not very enthusiastic about my decision” and that “he advised me not to hurry, which meant he was against it.” Sergo was initially surprised and upset and began questioning his credentials for the post. However, Kochar understood that the reason had nothing to do with Sergo’s professional background. “It seems to me that he [Zarobyan] does not want your father to get private information about Armenia,” he told him. “After all, he will trust you more.” (S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 122-123.)

peaceful park road,” recalled Astsatryan, “Anastas Ivanovich listened with interest to my stories about Armenian industry, construction, science and technology, rejoicing at even the usual successes.”<sup>129</sup> Mikoyan also complained to Astsatryan that Armenian state radio broadcasts were “poorly heard on the Armenian-populated Black Sea coast and that it can be assumed that they are not heard at all in foreign countries.” Concerned with highlighting Armenia as a model of Soviet success in the nationality sphere, he emphasized that “foreign Armenians needed to be fully aware of the successes of [Soviet] Armenia.” Indeed, that recognition also spread to the worldwide Armenian Diaspora.<sup>130</sup> In response, Astsatryan assured him that Yerevan “would definitely take measures to strengthen the capacity of our radio stations.” He noted that “this task was later accomplished through the efforts of communications specialists.”<sup>131</sup>

It was in this environment that Mikoyan provided his Armenian network with feedback for improvements in the republic. His input was not unsolicited and Armenian leaders actively sought it out and valued his opinions and ideas.<sup>132</sup> Mikoyan preferred to

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<sup>129</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 77.

<sup>130</sup> On his trips abroad, Mikoyan frequently encountered Armenian Diaspora communities and valued their perceptions of Soviet Armenia. For example, in the United States, Mikoyan had the opportunity to meet many Armenian Americans, including future US Ambassador to Syria and to Israel, Edward P. Djerejian. “I’m so glad to see Armenians doing well here in this country,” Mikoyan told him. “Well, Baron Mikoyan,” Djerejian replied, “you haven’t done so badly for yourself in the Soviet Union.” (Edward P. Djerejian, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Cleveland, April 6, 2019). Mikoyan also encountered Armenian communities in Latin America. For instance, in November 1959, while in Mexico City to open the Soviet Exhibition, he began chatting with a local woman in a language unknown to his translator Nikolai Leonov. “I didn’t understand a word,” Leonov recalled. “Anastas Ivanovich then turned to me and asked: ‘Well, why don’t you translate?’ I answered: ‘I do not understand it, Anastas Ivanovich. This is not Spanish. Apparently, it is some sort of language of the Indians from southern Mexico.’” Mikoyan laughed and responded “You passed the honesty test! I really thought that you would start translating something. She speaks Armenian and she is welcoming me on behalf of the Armenian community of Mexico.” He then proceeded to speak with her Armenian and asked Leonov to “apologize on his behalf to the entire hall.” (S. A. Mikoyan, “Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn’, otdannaia narodu,” 674.)

<sup>131</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 77.

<sup>132</sup> These sentiments are expressed by Armenian officials like Kochinyan and Astsatryan in their memoirs. Additionally, Mikoyan’s input was publicly recognized by Armenian officials and technical experts. For instance, during Mikoyan’s 1962 visit to Armenia, engineer G. M. Gulamiryan of the Lenin Electric Machine Building Plant in Yerevan emphasized that “we are deeply convinced, dear Anastas Ivanovich, that your stay

communicate such advice to his network informally, as Kochinyan and Astsatryan recounted in their memoirs. However, Armenian officials did compile a list of Mikoyan's recommendations from his March 1954 visit, which is held at the Russian State Archive (GARF).<sup>133</sup> These recommendations were varied, encompassing ideas for expanding economic opportunities, proposals for forestation in the republic, and even cultural suggestions. For instance, when Mikoyan first arrived in Yerevan to commence his trip, he paid a visit to Sergei Merkurov's Stalin monument in Victory Park, accompanied Armenian officials.<sup>134</sup> In the monument's pedestal, the museum to the Armenian contribution to the Great Patriotic War (today the Armenian Military Museum) was still under construction and Mikoyan advised his hosts to adorn the walls of each museum room with "different marble quarried in the Armenian SSR."<sup>135</sup> Later, on the same day that he was to deliver his Yerevan speech, Mikoyan traveled with Armenian officials to the sanatorium of Arzni in Armenia's Kotayk region. While inspecting the resort, Mikoyan advised the Armenian leadership to "allocate land for the construction of holiday homes and resorts for factory workers" at both Arzni and another Armenian resort, Jermuk. He also counseled them to build a hospital at Arzni "for kidney treatment for 50 patients."<sup>136</sup>

However, Mikoyan did not offer advice in a vacuum and usually did so amid consultations with Armenian leaders and local experts. Unfortunately, on the surviving list of his 1954 recommendations, that context is often missing. For instance, Mikoyan

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in Yerevan will be a great help to us in this matter. Your comments and instructions will allow us to accelerate the pace of technical progress and achieve new, even greater successes." ("Iarkaia demonstratsiia nerushimogo edinstva partii i naroda", *Kommunist*, March 15, 1962, 1.)

<sup>133</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 15-21.

<sup>134</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 1. As discussed in Chapter 1, the monument was later removed by the Soviet Armenian government in 1962 and replaced by the Mother Armenia statue in 1967.

<sup>135</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 1.

<sup>136</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 15.

advocated building a restaurant in Arzni and advised Armenian officials to work in conjunction with the Soviet Ministry of Commerce to “draw up a plan for the project and to begin construction in 1954.”<sup>137</sup> He also proposed building a railway linking the village of Gyumush and its hydroelectric power station to the glass factory in Arzni, advising Armenian leaders to “design the railway this year, assign the job to [Ara] Aghababov and agree with him.”<sup>138</sup> It is highly doubtful that projects of this scale would be proposed by Mikoyan on a whim without any accompanying consultation with local authorities, especially because in all other documented cases, Mikoyan made such recommendations in concert with them, in response to local needs, demands, and proposals.<sup>139</sup> The majority of Mikoyan’s 1954 recommendations were to be handled by the Armenian Council of Ministers, then chaired by Anton Kochinyan.<sup>140</sup> Significantly, in his memoirs written after Mikoyan’s death in 1978, Kochinyan did not express any sentiments suggesting that Mikoyan’s contributions were disruptive to the Armenian leadership.<sup>141</sup> In fact, as the memoirs of Kochinyan and others indicate, they welcomed and solicited them and viewed them as complementing their work in the republic.

Although the contexts for many of Mikoyan’s 1954 recommendations are missing, it is clear that many of them were oriented towards stimulating local economic opportunities. For instance, during his visit to Arzni, Mikoyan proposed moving the Arzni Mineral Water Plant to the plateau next to the glassworks and to have the Armenian Ministry of Trade open bottle assembly centers to expand local employment

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<sup>137</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 16.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Ara Aghababov was the Minister of Transportation and Highways of the Armenian SSR.

<sup>139</sup> For instance, as discussed earlier, Mikoyan made his recommendations in Sanahin, Tumanyan, and Kirovakan in response to local complaints (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 6-7 and 19-20).

<sup>140</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 15-21.

<sup>141</sup> Kochinyan recorded his reflections on Mikoyan at the very end of the Brezhnev era, in November 1982 (Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 383).

opportunities.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, he suggested that his Armenian colleagues rename the mineral water brand “Marmarik,” produced at the resort of Hankavan, to the name “Hankavan” and to provide an inscription indicating that the water is “recommended by the Ministry of Health of the USSR for medicinal purposes” as soon as there was confirmation of this information.<sup>143</sup> He further proposed splitting Hankavan from the Arzni Mineral Water Plant and making it an “an independent factory geared toward the production of therapeutic mineral water.”<sup>144</sup> Armenian leaders followed these suggestions, which contributed to enhancing Hankavan’s reputation within Armenia as a popular spa town. Mikoyan would return to inspect Hankavan in subsequent years, most notably in 1966.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, in discussions with Kochinyan and Astsatryan, Mikoyan advocated enhancing Dilijan’s position as a major spa town in Armenia and encouraging the development of tourism in the city and surrounding region.<sup>146</sup>

Mikoyan took a particular interest in assisting his Armenian network in expanding economic opportunities in his native Lori. During his 1954 trip to Alaverdi, Mikoyan also advised the Armenian leadership to build a dairy plant and a slaughterhouse with a sausage shop in Alaverdi.<sup>147</sup> Additionally, he endorsed the appointment of “political pensioner” Nikolai Kostandyan for the position of the Chief Accountant of the Alaverdi Brewery.<sup>148</sup> In nearby Uzunlar (Odzun), he suggested the construction of canning and packaging factories for the drying and processing of wild fruit.<sup>149</sup> At the Shahumyan *sovkhos* near

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<sup>142</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 15 and 17.

<sup>143</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 15.

<sup>144</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 16.

<sup>145</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 342, l. 3.

<sup>146</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar.* 69-70, and Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 389.

<sup>147</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 19.

<sup>148</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 21.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

Kirovakan, Mikoyan counseled Soviet Armenian officials to “build a drying and packaging plant for both fresh fruits and dried fruits,” to consider the transfer of the adjoining Horut *kolkhoz* into the *sovkhos*, and to restore a nearby pig farm that been dissolved after the war.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, Mikoyan urged the Soviet Ministry of Food Industry to “speed-up the design” of a distillery for nearby Spitak.<sup>151</sup>

Similarly, Mikoyan advocated expanding economic opportunities in Ijevan, which Armenian authorities regarded as an important northern “gateway” to the republic from neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>152</sup> Ijevan was difficult to access via railway, therefore limiting the possibilities for developing heavy industry in the area. “Under such circumstances,” recalled Kochinyan, “the best way forward was to develop light industry and our first step in this regard was the construction of a carpet factory.”<sup>153</sup> In Moscow, Kochinyan met with Kosygin, who was then the Gosplan Chairman, to discuss the matter. Kosygin was planning to travel to Leipzig in East Germany as the head of a Soviet delegation. Kochinyan asked if he could explore the possibility of purchasing German equipment to build a carpet factory in Ijevan. “I cannot promise a positive outcome,” he told the Armenian politician, “but send Garnik Darbinyan with our delegation. If there is an opportunity, he will work to arrange the shipment of equipment from Germany.”<sup>154</sup>

Accompanying the delegation, Darbinyan, a light industry official at the time who was trusted by Kosygin, was able to secure an agreement to purchase equipment in Leipzig. The plan was approved by First Secretary Tovmasyan. However, at the last minute,

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<sup>150</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 18.

<sup>151</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 18 and 20.

<sup>152</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 387.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

Tovmasyan proposed re-locating the proposed factory from Ijevan to Sevan, on the northern shore of Lake Sevan. Finally, “after a long argument and Mikoyan’s intervention, we decided to build the factory in Ijevan, and it became one of the leading enterprises in our republic,” Kochinyan recalled.<sup>155</sup> During a later visit to Ijevan, Mikoyan inspected the carpet factory and spoke to its director Iu. Yepremyan, as well as the Head of Armenia’s Light and Textile Industry Department A. Tonoyan and the Ijevan Raikom Secretary V. Ghalumyan. In recognition of his efforts, the factory staff presented him with “one of the very first examples of an Artsakh [Karabakh] carpet created by the company, at the last hour of a warm farewell.” As Astsatryan recounted, Mikoyan “carefully scrutinized the patterns of the beautiful carpet with great interest and expressed his deep gratitude to the staff of the factory and its management. ‘It is with great gratitude and love,’ he said, ‘that I accept this precious gift and send it to the kindergarten in Ijevan, wishing the children a happy life and good luck!’”<sup>156</sup>

Mikoyan also collaborated with Armenian authorities to enhance forestation efforts throughout the republic. His involvement in these initiatives had a history predating the Thaw. According to Kochinyan, Mikoyan had advocated for the expansion of greenspace in Yerevan beginning from the time of Arutinov’s appointment as Armenia’s First Secretary in September 1937, when a dust storm swept through the Armenian capital.<sup>157</sup> His efforts could be viewed in the context of larger forestation efforts made by the Soviet state during the Stalin era.<sup>158</sup> However, it would be impossible to ignore the significance

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar.* 69.

<sup>157</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 383-386.

<sup>158</sup> On forestry under Stalin, see Stephen Brain, *Song of the Forest: Russian Forestry and Stalinist Environmentalism, 1905–1953* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

of such initiatives in the specific Armenian context, in which local Soviet Armenian authorities sought to improve the arid climate conditions of Yerevan and the neighboring sunbaked raions of central Armenia through greater forestation.<sup>159</sup>

During the Thaw, Mikoyan took an even more active role in the forestation of the republic, in tandem with his Armenian network. For instance, on his 1954 trip, he drew attention of Armenian officials to “unused convenient lands located on the slopes of the mountains” near Kirovakan “for the sharp increase in the planting of fruit trees.”<sup>160</sup> After inspecting a textile factory in the city, Mikoyan not only advised Armenian officials to expand and improve the facility, but to increase greenspace around it.<sup>161</sup> He also urged his Armenian associates to “increase the planting of fruit trees” at the nearby Shahumyan *sovkhos* and, in Kochinyan’s native village of Shagali (Vahagni), to increase the planting of dogwood trees for cornelian cherry cultivation.<sup>162</sup> In the vicinity of Sanahin, Kochinyan reported that “several fruit trees planted at Mikoyan’s instruction were showing good fruiting and have withstood the local climate conditions.” Mikoyan in turn “recommended that [additional] fruit trees be planted on the entire slope of the mountain” that was near

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<sup>159</sup> During her visit to Soviet Armenia in 1932, Armenian American lawyer Aghavnie Yeghenian observed: “A new campaign of forestation is on its way. The Young Communists, the Pioneers, and all youth and children’s organizations have been mobilized in a great tree-planting campaign. In 1930, 320,000 trees were planted and the campaign will continue until the number is increased to 500,000. Every year after this the tree-planting campaign will be launched with ceremonies, and the significance of a great national celebration will be given to it. Thus the naked Armenian mountains will be clothed with trees, and it is hoped that the forests will have an effect in changing the climate by creating moisture through the green of the trees.” (Aghavnie Yeghenian, *The Red Flag at Ararat* (London: Sterndale Classics (Gomidas Institute), 2013), 42-43.) According to Hovik Sayadyan and Rafael Moreno-Sanchez, forestation policies intensified in the 1950s. After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, these forestation efforts in Armenia received a blow due to the energy crisis and Turkish-Azerbaijani blockade of the 1990s, in which locals illegally cut down trees to keep warm during cold winters. (see Sayadyan and Moreno-Sanchez, “Forest policies, management and conservation in Soviet (1920–1991) and post-Soviet (1991–2005) Armenia,” *Environmental Conservation* 33, no. 1 (March 2006): 60-72.) In response to this crisis, the Armenia Tree Project (ATP) initiative was launched by philanthropist Carolyn Mugar to help restore the republic’s forests. (see “Mission and History”, *Armenia Tree Project*, 2019, <https://www.armeniatree.org/en/mission> (accessed April 5, 2021).)

<sup>160</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 5.

<sup>161</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 18.

<sup>162</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 18 and 20.



the village.<sup>163</sup> He also advised extensive tree-planting around the Yerevan Champagne Wines Factory, in the resort village of Arzni, and in Gyumush and the nearby Guymush Hydroelectric Power Station, which would be lined with a mix of both decorative and fruit trees.<sup>164</sup> In addition, he recommended lining the highway between Yerevan and Sevan “with ornamental trees and two to three rows of fruit trees.”<sup>165</sup> The latter remains a major feature of the Yerevan-Sevan highway to this day.

However, not all of Mikoyan’s proposed forestation initiatives were successful. For example, unfamiliar with the soil of the Aghstev River Gorge, Mikoyan proposed planting walnut trees along the highway connecting Ijevan to the rest of Armenia. The Armenian authorities agreed with that suggestion and planted walnut trees along the highway, beginning from Uzuntala (Aygehovit). Although the project succeeded in enhancing the beauty of the area, its results were limited. “Regrettably that the intended effect was not realized,” Kochinyan wrote.<sup>166</sup>

Mikoyan regularly brought shortcomings in Lori and northern Armenia to the attention of the Soviet Armenian leadership. For instance, when he arrived in Armenia at the Ayrum station on the border with Georgia to commence his March 1954 visit, he complained about the glum look of his native land to his Armenian associates. Kochinyan was sent by First Secretary Tovmasyan to greet him, accompanied by Deputy Secretary of the Armenian Central Committee Hratch Margaryan. As Kochinyan recounted:

The first question that Mikoyan asked us, was ‘When will the peaceful serenity of the Lori gorge be disturbed by some kind of excitement? It is so gloomy and sad here, especially when you drive through it at night.’ Mikoyan turned our attention

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<sup>163</sup> GARF, f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 7.

<sup>164</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, ll. 15-16.

<sup>165</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 15.

<sup>166</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 386.

to the fact that not a single light was visible anywhere. It was known that the villages in this area were located on a hill and their lights were not visible from the railway. It really was a gloomy picture. At that time, the organization of the Noyemberyan *sovkhoses* had yet been completed and that plain was like a real desert – dry, almost uninhabited. In short, a rather unpleasant picture... It was these conditions of Mikoyan’s native Lori, with its otherwise magnificent nature, that left such a negative impression on him.<sup>167</sup>

To illuminate the area, Mikoyan advised Kochinyan “to expedite the completion of the construction of the Ayrum Hydroelectric Power Station for the Ayrum *sovkhoses*.”<sup>168</sup> The Armenian leadership moved quickly to resolve the issue. Within a few years, the look of northern Lori’s landscape changed dramatically thanks to the completion of the small Ayrum Hydroelectric Power Station in 1957. “As soon as you reached our border,” recalled Kochinyan, “the first lights visible from Ayrum would be the lights of the distant village of Archis, which appear as if they are hanging from the sky, because of that community’s location on a high mountainside edge of a deep gorge.” He contrasted that old scene with the new subsequent new developments. “When you arrive from Tbilisi now... Instead of the former deserts, you can see new *sovkhoses*, new gardens, new urban-type settlements, and huge waterworks facilities,” he wrote.<sup>169</sup> Throughout the Thaw and even into retirement, Mikoyan continued to pay particularly close attention to developments in Lori.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 207-208.

<sup>168</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 21.

<sup>169</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 209.

<sup>170</sup> Mikoyan’s last recorded visit to Lori was in September 1969, although he may have visited it again in the 1970s. During that visit, he took part in the celebrations honoring the 100th anniversary of the Armenian national poet Hovhannes Tumanyan. The celebrations were held in Tumanyan’s native village, Dsegh, with Mikoyan accompanied by Kochinyan, Badal Muradyan, and Marshal Baghramyan (RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 397, l. 55ob). Of Tumanyan, Mikoyan wrote: “I became enthusiastically acquainted with the works of the classical Armenian writer Hovhannes Tumanyan – my great compatriot and relative, whom I was lucky to subsequently know personally. In his books, I became particularly captivated by his descriptions of the people and places close to me in my native region of Lori. In the language of Tumanyan, I met many words and expressions of our Lori dialect.” (Anastas Mikoyan, *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o Minuvshem* [So It Was: Reflections on the Past] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2014), 34).

Outside Lori, Mikoyan inspected and advised economic projects in the southern Armenian provinces of Zangezur (Syunik) and Daralagyaz (Vayots Dzor).<sup>171</sup> During his March 1962 visit to Meghri, on the Iranian border, he “constantly asked questions about locations, settlements, occupations, and living conditions.” As Astsatryan recalled, “each of us worked to answer the questions of interest to him, but Kochinyan was the main expert on household issues and locations.”<sup>172</sup> The trip from the subsequent inspection of the mining town of Kajaran was picturesque but difficult.<sup>173</sup> Mikoyan inquired to his colleagues how the rough mountainous road functioned during the winter season. Astsatryan explained that Yerevan was working to clear the road and build a Kajaran-Meghri tunnel that would provide faster travel to the Iranian border. Both Zarobyan and Kochinyan confirmed his statements.<sup>174</sup> It was not the first time that Mikoyan discussed road improvements with the Armenian leadership. During his 1954 trip, the ride from

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<sup>171</sup> According to Kochinyan, Mikoyan had long wanted to visit these mountainous provinces because he had been unable to do so during the Sovietization of Armenia in the 1920s. At that time, they were a veritable battleground between the Armenian Bolsheviks, supported by the 11th Red Army, and the anti-Soviet Dashnak forces, led by Garegin Njdeh. However, even after these rebels were defeated by Soviet forces and fled into Iran, Mikoyan was unable to see Zangezur and Daralagyaz. During the era of Arutinov, he once again sought to visit these provinces, but with no success. “Once in a conversation,” recalled Kochinyan, “Mikoyan even expressed a desire to transfer his Supreme Soviet electorate from Yerevan to Zangezur, but such a move was not possible at that time.” When he traveled to Armenia in 1962, he decided that now would be the best time to finally visit these provinces. “He said that since the revolutionary period, he wanted to go to Zangezur and Daralagyaz, but never managed to do so,” wrote Kochinyan. “This time he felt that he would probably succeed.” (Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 397.)

<sup>172</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 71. GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 6. See also E. Melik-Nubarov and R. Karagezyan, “Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii” [“Comrade A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia”], *Kommunist*, March 14, 1962, 1.

<sup>173</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 72, and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 6. According to Kochinyan, it was Mikoyan who years earlier, reportedly suggested giving the mine the name “Kajaran,” after the nearby village that eventually grew into a major industrial city. In the late 1940s, Mikoyan supervised the exploration of non-ferrous metallurgy in the Soviet Union and Yegor Harutyunyan, the then-head of the Geology Department of Soviet Armenia, reported to him about developments regarding the Kajaran mine, then known as Pirdauta. Initially, Mikoyan insisted that “there can be no other name for the mine aside from Pirdauta.” However, when Harutyunyan mentioned the village of Kajaran, Mikoyan liked the name so much that he advised official Yerevan to “change all the documents and rename the mine Kajaran (see Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 397-398).

<sup>174</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 74. It is worth noting that the roads and highways of southern Armenia have been substantially repaired and updated due to funds from the Armenian diaspora and especially Kirk Kerkorian. However, as of 2021, the tunnel linking Kajaran to Meghri and the Iranian border remains unfinished.

Arzni to Gyumush was also apparently not easy, and Mikoyan advised his Armenian colleagues to “asphalt the road to Gyumush.”<sup>175</sup>

Mikoyan also encouraged the Armenian leadership to enhance development around Lake Sevan. After Khrushchev’s 1961 visit to the lake, Kochinyan related to Mikoyan the General Secretary’s frustrations with the lack of eateries and resorts around its shores. “After listening to this story,” Kochinyan recalled, “Mikoyan told me that he was aware of the incident, that he already spoke about it with Khrushchev, and that he agreed with him. At Mikoyan’s suggestion, we divided the lake among various departments and ministries, which would quickly begin construction of, first and foremost, trade unions and a local ‘Intourist’ agency.” Within a few years, the appearance of the Sevan area changed dramatically, with the presence of new “restaurants, vacation homes, and children’s resorts.”<sup>176</sup> Mikoyan also told Kochinyan that Sevan “should be developed to serve more healthcare facilities,” and that “because there are no prospects for the development of agriculture, it will be necessary to build some enterprises, especially electro-technical or radio-electronics, but only those that do not produce waste.”<sup>177</sup> As with the Alaverdi Copper Smelter, Mikoyan was again expressing ecological concerns over the possibility of over-development of the lake’s vicinity, including waste generated from the tourist industry and the threat of eutrophication.<sup>178</sup>

During discussions with the Armenian leadership regarding the Hrazdan raion, Mikoyan also suggested that several small towns between Yerevan and Sevan should be

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<sup>175</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1113, l. 17.

<sup>176</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 390-391.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> As of 2021, eutrophication has already adversely affected Lake Sevan, which has confronted the serious problem of harmful algal blooms in recent years. For further information, see Gor Gevorgyan, et al., “First report about toxic cyanobacterial bloom occurrence in Lake Sevan, Armenia,” *International Review of Hydrobiology* 105, no. 5-6 (June 2020): 1-12.

built up, becoming “satellites of Yerevan.” At that time, Astsatryan wrote, “more than a third of the republic’s human and economic potential was concentrated in Yerevan.” Mikoyan was apprehensive about the capital’s close proximity to the Soviet-Turkish border. He earlier expressed such a sentiment to the architect Mark Grigorian in 1939, when it appeared that Turkey might ally with Nazi Germany in a potential war against the Soviet Union.<sup>179</sup> The situation in the Thaw era was different, but the threat remained the same. Instead of a potential ally of Nazi Germany, Turkey was now member of NATO and Mikoyan was “very concerned that it was especially dangerous from a military point of view.”<sup>180</sup> He echoed this view in a November 1962 meeting with US President John F. Kennedy, immediately following the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>181</sup> In response, the Armenian authorities moved quickly to remedy the situation and spread out the republic’s development by building up a series of towns serving as links connecting Lake Sevan to the Armenian capital.<sup>182</sup> Among them are the modern Armenian towns of Abovyan, Nor Hachn, Charenshevan, Arzni, Gagarin, Hrazdan, and the city of Sevan.

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<sup>179</sup> In 1939, Mikoyan consulted Grigorian about developing a second major road out of Yerevan, due to his fears about the city’s vulnerability to a German-Turkish attack. At the time, there was only one major road leading out of Yerevan, making it extremely difficult for the government to both evacuate civilians and dispatch military forces. Grigorian proposed the construction of a second major road out of the city – today’s Myasnikyan Avenue – to resolve the matter. Grigorian’s grandson, the scholar Mark Grigorian, is today the director of the National Museum-Institute of Architecture after Aleksandr Tamanyan in Yerevan. In an interview with this author, he stressed that the state funding that had been secured for Armenia for its large infrastructure projects during the war years, as well as state support for the development of new institutions, such as the Armenian Academy of Sciences, would not have been possible without Mikoyan’s patronage in Moscow (Mark Grigorian, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Yerevan, September 9, 2019).

<sup>180</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 71.

<sup>181</sup> At one point in their meeting, Kennedy asked Mikoyan “what position the Soviet Union would take if, for example, the United States decided to set up missile bases in Finland. Would people be able to sleep well in Leningrad in such a situation?” Mikoyan responded that the people of Leningrad would “sleep just as well as the people in Armenia because of the bases in Turkey, since the United States is aware of the counter-strike they should expect in the case of an attack.” (“Hungarian Legation in Washington (János Radványi), Report on Mikoyan’s Visit to Washington,” *Hungarian Foreign Ministry (Wilson Center Digital Archive and History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive of the Hungarian National Archives (MOL), Budapest*), December 5, 1962 <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116840> (accessed September 12, 2019)).

<sup>182</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 392.

Mikoyan also proposed the construction of Yerevan's Hrazdan Stadium. He maintained a seasonal residence in the city, overlooking the Hrazdan Gorge.<sup>183</sup> Constructed of black tuff, the residence is now the home of Armenia's first post-Soviet president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan.<sup>184</sup> During one of his trips to Yerevan in the 1950s, Mikoyan suggested using the natural space of the Hrazdan Gorge for building a large stadium with a capacity of 20,000, and called it "Pishevik," or "the foodman," a reference to Mikoyan's involvement in the Soviet food industry.<sup>185</sup> The stadium idea was eventually realized under Kochinyan during his tenure as Armenian First Secretary in 1970. Koryun Hakobyan and Gurgen Musheghyan served as co-architects, and Karen Demirchyan, then First Secretary of the Yerevan City Soviet, closely supervised the project. On December 1, 1970, during Mikoyan's last recorded trip to Armenia, marking the 50th anniversary of the republic's Sovietization, he visited the stadium, just as construction was finished.<sup>186</sup> He was reportedly very pleased with the completed project and met with its architects and builders in the Hrazdan Valley. At the meeting, Musheghyan told Mikoyan "I am aware that the construction of this stadium was your idea. I think you should be glad that it has now become a reality today."<sup>187</sup>

Mikoyan not only expressed his input privately with Armenian leaders, but openly encouraged improvements and called out shortcomings in his public speeches in Armenia.

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<sup>183</sup> According to Anton Kochinyan, Mikoyan selected the sight for the rest home during his short 1946 visit toward the end of the Arutinov era, just after the war. See Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 385.

<sup>184</sup> Mark Grigorian, interview by Pietro A. Shakarian, Yerevan, September 9, 2019.

<sup>185</sup> Anahit Poghosyan and Anush Ter-Minasyan, eds. *Ararman ughin: Chartarapet Gurgen Musheghyan* [The Way of Creation: Architect Gurgen Musheghyan] (Yerevan: Tapan, 2019), 34. See also Mark Grigoryan's interview with Hrazdan Stadium co-architect Gurgen Musheghyan as part of the Armenian documentary series *Antsanot Yerevan*, or *Unknown Yerevan: Antsanot Yerevan 44: Hrazdan marzadasht* [Unknown Yerevan 44: Hrazdan Stadium], directed by Karen Kocharyan (ATV Armenia, 2018).

<sup>186</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 342, l. 12.

<sup>187</sup> Poghosyan and Ter-Minasyan, *Ararman ughin*, 51.

“There is no need to hide it,” Mikoyan told his audience during his March 1954 speech in Yerevan, “but services in a number of cities and towns are working very poorly.” These services included hotels, barber shops, laundries, baths, and more. Calling for improvements, he joked that some heads of these services “should have, as people say, arranged to take a good ‘bath’ a long time ago.” He went on to cite the poor state of baths in Kapan, Alaverdi, and Artashat, which were in “such a state of disrepair that the population cannot even regularly use them.” Switching to Armenian, he quoted from Hovhannes Tumanyan’s poem *The Dog and the Cat* and cited the crafty cat’s inability to fulfill the dog’s order for a hat as an example of poor customer service and “red tape.”<sup>188</sup>

In his June 1970 speech in Yerevan, Mikoyan, after enumerating the successes in Armenia achieved over the previous 50 years, noted that more improvements had to be made. “The feeling of pride must not cause complacency,” he warned. “It must not overshadow the shortcomings and mistakes, or the difficulties that must be eliminated in order to enter the second half of the century with even better results. It is necessary to use criticism and self-criticism – Lenin’s proven weapon of the Party to identify and eliminate shortcomings, and to fight bureaucracy and red tape in violation of socialist lawfulness.”<sup>189</sup> Although praising Armenia’s “significant progress in the field of agriculture,” he also criticized *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses* in the republic for paying “insufficient attention” to the care of the land and that, as a result, “planned targets in this area were being unsatisfactorily fulfilled.” He added that “if construction in the republic was well organized and capital construction plans were fulfilled, then the results would be even better,” with more new houses, schools, and hospitals built in Armenia. Nevertheless, he noted that construction

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<sup>188</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1111, ll. 37-40.

<sup>189</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 10.

was “reportedly progressing” in the early months of 1970 and hoped that “the momentum would continue to be maintained.”<sup>190</sup> In addition, while speaking highly of Soviet Armenia’s “socialist intelligentsia,” Mikoyan highlighted that there were “large reserves of knowledge” in Armenia’s technical fields that were “not being used” and needed to be “quickly put into practice.” “In an age of technical revolution,” he added, “this is absolutely inadmissible.” He then advised his audience that it was “necessary to not only accelerate the development of scientific knowledge, but also to quickly put it into practice.”<sup>191</sup>

As with his role as an advocate for Armenia, Mikoyan’s position as an advisor served to augment his Armenian network. His discussions and feedback to Armenian leaders could take on the form of articulating approaches toward funding proposals, recommendations for expanding economic opportunities and forestation, or presenting plans to strengthen the security of the republic from potential foreign attacks. He frequently offered such advice in informal conversation, deferring to Armenian leaders despite his higher rank, thus blurring lines of official hierarchy. He also advocated for improvements from the podium, in his public speeches to the citizens of the republic. All these forms of advising served to strengthen the bond between Mikoyan and his Armenian network during the Thaw.

## **Pageantries of Nationalism**

When Mikoyan arrived by plane in Yerevan at the start of his March 1962 trip to Armenia, he was greeted by a large crowd at the newly opened Zvartnots Airport who shouted

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<sup>190</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, ll. 11-12.

<sup>191</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 53, l. 12.



greetings of “Bari Galust!” and “Welcome Dear Anastas Ivanovich!” Upon arrival, Mikoyan, per the traditional Soviet custom, was greeted with a large bouquet of flowers presented by a group of young Soviet Armenian pioneers whom he then embraced.<sup>192</sup> From here, Mikoyan and his entourage, which consisted of his son Sergo and Zarobyan and Kochinyan, drove into Yerevan in an open convertible car as “thousands of people warmly welcomed Mikoyan from the entire route” from the airfield to his Yerevan dacha.<sup>193</sup> Massive public receptions such as these greeted Mikoyan everywhere he went in Armenia during all of his trips to the republic. Large crowds of observers gathered along the sides of roads to watch as his motorcade drove past them.

Such enthusiastic displays of propagandistic pageantry were the result of an interplay in which top-down official receptions arranged by the Soviet state were complemented by bottom-up expressions of nationalism from the Armenian public. Like the tsarist pageants and coronations of a century earlier, the large receptions for Mikoyan in Armenia were intended by Soviet authorities to reflect the power of the state.<sup>194</sup> From the bottom-up, the population complemented these state spectacles by turning out enthusiastically *en masse* (see figures 13 and 14). When visiting Thaw-era Yerevan, it was not uncommon for visitors to see, as Vasilii Grossman did in 1962, “countless portraits” of Mikoyan throughout the city.<sup>195</sup> Certainly, to many Soviet Armenians, Mikoyan was the embodiment of Armenian national success within the Soviet system. He was personal

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<sup>192</sup> “Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii”, March 13, 1962, 1.

<sup>193</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, ll. 1-2. These scenes can be seen at the start of the documentary film *A. I. Mikoyane Hayastanum* [A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1962).

<sup>194</sup> For an examination on Imperial Russia’s uses of ceremonies as a means of projecting power, see Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy, from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, Vols. I and II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995 and 2000).

<sup>195</sup> Grossman, *An Armenian Sketchbook*, 24.

proof positive that anyone, even an Armenian from Sanahin, could rise through the ranks and become, in Kochinyan's words, "the [de jure] president of the multiethnic Soviet Union" in 1964. The fact that a non-Russian figure like Mikoyan could rise so high through the system and influence policy further enhances the case for the USSR as a "mobilization state" rather than an "empire" with defined hierarchies. "For the first time in our centuries-old history, an Armenian had risen to the Russian throne," Kochinyan wrote, referring to popular Armenian attitudes toward Mikoyan. "He made every Armenian proud."<sup>196</sup> He added that it was "through his surname that the Armenian people gained international recognition."<sup>197</sup> The perception of Mikoyan as a "success story" greatly enhanced his popular national appeal. Unlike tsarist-era pageantry, in which the tsar was cast as above the people, the perceived success of Mikoyan reflected the promise of mobility, inviting the prospect that the Armenian people could be elevated by the Soviet system as well.

In many ways, Mikoyan also represented the embodiment of what Maike Lehmann dubbed "Apricot Socialism," bringing together both the "Soviet" and the "national" into a single political figure. His civil war-era revolutionary credentials and his association with Lenin and the "original promise" of the 1917 revolution only enhanced his position in this regard. Therefore, the popular celebrations of Mikoyan functioned as popular celebrations of both Soviet government, and Armenian nationalism and Armenian success and achievement within the Soviet system. Additionally, the scale of the popular receptions that Mikoyan received during the Thaw had a lingering impact beyond the Thaw itself. These events enabled the Armenian public to see the potential of mass gatherings, which nationally minded activists would later use to express popular national demands through

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<sup>196</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 398.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

the lens of loyalty to the Soviet state. Such a development became apparent as early as 1965 with the demonstrations in Yerevan demanding recognition of the 1915 Genocide.<sup>198</sup>

Accounts of the large Mikoyan receptions reflect that some of the republic's remotest regions gave him the most impressive showings, most notably his native Lori in the north and Syunik (Zangezur) in the south. The receptions illustrate well their complementary nature – functioning as an interplay of the top-down and bottom-up, the “Soviet” and the “national.” For the Soviet state, Mikoyan's presence in cities like far-flung Meghri on the Iranian border allowed it to make its presence known to even the remotest corners of the USSR. For the Armenian communities hosting these receptions, they were opportunities to celebrate a major Soviet Armenian figure and express a form of Armenian nationalism acceptable to Moscow. Mikoyan was particularly well-received in his native Lori region. On the final day of his 1962 trip, he traveled to Sanahin, together with Sergo, Zarobyan, Kochinyan, and Astsatryan. The idea for the visit was conceived by Mikoyan himself. Astsatryan recalled that when he and other officials were on their way to an important meeting with Zarobyan, Kochinyan informed them that “Mikoyan had arrived in Yerevan and that he wanted to visit Alaverdi, his native village of Sanahin, and see his grandfather's house.”<sup>199</sup>

In Alaverdi, “thousands of workers from the city and the nearby villages gathered on the square in front of the new train station building,” in anticipation of the arrival of their native son.<sup>200</sup> According to Astsatryan, “because the area of the town was very

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<sup>198</sup> Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism,” 14-18.

<sup>199</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 74-75.

<sup>200</sup> “Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii” [“Comrade A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia”], *Kommunist*, March 16, 1962, 1. Footage of the massive crowd scenes can be seen in the documentary film *A. I. Mikoyane Hayastanum* [A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1962).

limited, the rally [to see Mikoyan] was naturally held at the train station and it was attended by virtually the entire population of Alaverdi.”<sup>201</sup> Mikoyan’s appearance was “greeted with enthusiastic applause and the presentation of large bouquets of native mountain flowers from children.”<sup>202</sup> Alaverdi’s First Secretary A. Stepanyan, “warmly and cordially welcomed Anastas Ivanovich to his homeland” and presented him with “samples of minerals mined in the area and products manufactured by the Copper Smelter.”<sup>203</sup> From the station balcony, Mikoyan gave a brief address, with Zarobyan, Kochinyan, Astsatryan, and others present.<sup>204</sup> In his “warm speech to his compatriots,” Mikoyan “recalled his grandmother and mother and related their kind and clever advice.” Visibly moved, he “thanked all the organizers and participants of the meeting.”<sup>205</sup>

It was not the only time that Mikoyan became “visibly moved” by such popular displays. In footage of Mikoyan preparing to deliver his speech at the Yerevan Opera Theatre during his 1962 visit, he is moved to tears by the storm of lengthy applause from his compatriots.<sup>206</sup> Kochinyan also noted such outbursts of sentiment in his memoirs when recounting Mikoyan’s second trip to Syunik. “They say that Mikoyan was a very strong man with nerves,” wrote Kochinyan. “This was true, but during this trip, he could not restrain himself. With one hand, he was wiping tears from his eyes with a handkerchief. With the other, he was greeting the people. It is impossible to write about such a meeting. One had to see and experience the warmth, happiness, and joy of the people. Both in Kapan

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<sup>201</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 75.

<sup>202</sup> “Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan v Armenii,” March 16, 1962, 1.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 13.

<sup>205</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 75.

<sup>206</sup> *A. I. Mikoyane Hayastanum* [A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1962).

and in the mountains of its beautiful valley, many cried out to Mikoyan ‘let me take your pain’ (*tsavd tanem*).”<sup>207</sup>

Mikoyan’s 1962 visit to his native Sanahin in Lori functioned not only as a popular reception, but also as a family reunion, with Mikoyan visiting extended family and relatives. “The villagers were happy to see such a large number of high-profile visitors come so unexpectedly to the small, forested hillside village of our esteemed guest,” remembered Astsatryan.<sup>208</sup> After drinking water from the spring at the local World War II memorial, Mikoyan, Zarobyan, and Kochinyan each planted one cypress tree next to it in a ceremony attended by a large number of locals.<sup>209</sup> This occasion was followed by another, more solemn ceremony at the Sanahin cemetery, in which Mikoyan planted a cypress tree at his father’s grave.<sup>210</sup> By stressing the family connection, the second ceremony in particular served to reinforce Mikoyan’s connection to his native Sanahin, and by extension, to Lori and to Armenia. After meeting with locals at the village school, the guests were then invited to an extended family dinner. “After a heartwarming reunion,” Astsatryan recalled, “Mikoyan’s sisters and other friends and relatives invited the guests to their home where they had the table prepared with the ancient dishes of their grandparents.”<sup>211</sup> After dinner and a rest, Mikoyan and his entourage finally returned to Alaverdi and then back to Yerevan via overnight train.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 402. The phrase is a common set expression in the Armenian language, referring to the difficult historical experiences of the Armenian people.

<sup>208</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 75-76.

<sup>209</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 13. Footage of the tree-planting ceremony can be seen in the documentary film *A. I. Mikoyane Hayastanum* [A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1962).

<sup>210</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 13.

<sup>211</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 75-76.

<sup>212</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, ll. 13-14.

The receptions that the locals gave Mikoyan in the southern provinces of Syunik and Vayots Dzor were equally impressive. During Mikoyan's 1962 trip to Meghri, young pioneers gave their welcome a local twist by presenting their visitor with almond and apricot blossoms, symbolizing the rich agriculture of the Meghri raion.<sup>213</sup> When Mikoyan visited Kapan in the late 1960s with then-First Secretary Kochinyan, and Council of Ministers Chairman Badal Muradyan, "the city never seemed more excited." Kochinyan recalled that "almost all residents of the Kapan raion – big and small – were gathered at the airport" and that "several tens of thousands of people" had come to meet Mikoyan.<sup>214</sup> From Kapan, Mikoyan's entourage planned to drive south to Kajaran. However, the drive was slowed considerably due to the massive crowd of onlookers who arrived to greet Mikoyan. "The drive from Kapan to Kajaran is only a half-hour, but for us, it was two-and-a-half-hours," recalled Kochinyan. "The population of each village considered it their duty to stop the procession of cars, welcome us, kiss the great guest, express good wishes, and only then allow us to continue on our way." Both sides of the road connecting Kapan to Kajaran were filled with large crowds waiting to welcome Mikoyan. "Never before had the Kapan canyon been so crowded with people," recalled Kochinyan. "Everyone was welcoming and gave their best greetings to Mikoyan. The beautiful gorge of Kapan was made even more beautiful by the slogans and colorful flags."<sup>215</sup> Massive crowd scenes

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<sup>213</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1720, l. 6. See also Melik-Nubarov and Karagezyan, "Tovarish A. I. Mikoyan," March 14, 1962, 1. Within Armenia, Meghri is known as a region that produces exceptionally sweet fruits. This reputation is reflected in the name of the town, which literally translates as "honey" in the Armenian language.

<sup>214</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 397.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

akin to those described by Kochinyan were also captured on film by Jergiz Zhamharyan during Mikoyan's trips to Kapan, Kajaran, and Agarak (near Meghri) in 1962.<sup>216</sup>

Mikoyan's receptions were similarly sizeable in nearby Goris and its surrounding villages, where he and his entourage had the opportunity to interact with locals. In Kornidzor, a *kolkhoznik* modestly treated Mikoyan, Kochinyan, Muradyan, and the other visitors to a reception of fruits, bread and cheese.<sup>217</sup> Mikoyan was also impressed by the architecture of these villages, which he likened to that of Shushi in Nagorno-Karabakh. Notably, during a brief stop in the village of Tegh, locals pointed out the location of the birthplace of Sahak Ter-Gabrielyan in nearby Karabakh. Upon hearing the name of Ter-Gabrielyan, Mikoyan reportedly became "deeply sorrowful," recalling his "tragic death" at the hands of Armenian NKVD chief Khachik Mugdusi during the Purges.<sup>218</sup>

Humor added levity to these visits, "humanizing" the high officials from Moscow and Yerevan. In a visit to the village of Khndzoresk, Mikoyan approached one of the local village women and greeted her. The modest middle-aged woman, dressed in traditional Armenian garb, greeted him back. Kochinyan then recalled that Mikoyan "asked her how many children she had. The woman blushed and proudly answered 'three!' When Mikoyan said that it was too small, the surprised woman asked, 'How many children did your wife have?' He replied, 'Five boys.' She laughed heartily and said: 'Your wife is a *rashid* [hero]. There is no way that I can top her!'"<sup>219</sup> Back in Goris, the entourage was treated to dinner "at the city's highest point" at the invitation of Suren Bakunts, a jovial *sovkhos* director.

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<sup>216</sup> *A. I. Mikoyane Hayastanum* [A. I. Mikoyan in Armenia], directed by Jergiz Zhamharyan (Yerevan Chronicle-Documentary Film Studio, 1962).

<sup>217</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 399.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 287-288. For further details on the murder of Ter-Gabrielyan, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 287-288, and 400.

“I never saw Mikoyan with so much joy and in such high spirits,” wrote Kochinyan. “In particular, Bakunts’ jokes in the Goris dialect did much to raise his mood.”<sup>220</sup>

On the same trip, Mikoyan and his entourage also visited Azizbekov (Vayk), Yeghegnadzor, and Jermuk, in the region of Vayots Dzor. Receptions in these cities were also sizeable. “It seemed as though Vayots Dzor had not seen such a joy for a long time,” recalled Kochinyan. “Residents of distant villages came to the center of the city, playing their traditional zurnas.” For the lavish outdoor reception, the locals “placed tables on the streets” and “served drinks, fruit, bread, meat, and other dishes” to their visiting guests.<sup>221</sup> The structure was the same in Yeghegnadzor, where every villager had a table from which they invited guests to taste their wares. Kochinyan also noted that the reception in Yeghegnadzor “seemed more intimate, even though the city was previously named after Mikoyan.”<sup>222</sup> Indeed, the historical center of the region, Yeghegnadzor, was known as *Mikoyan*, after Anastas, from 1935 to 1957 when it re-assumed its former historical name.<sup>223</sup> The toponym change was made in accordance with the September 1957 law adopted by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, which mandated that no city, village, raion, or locality could be named after a living person and that such an honor could only be bestowed posthumously.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 400 and 288.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>223</sup> HAA f. 207, op. 60, d. 31, ll. 14-15. The city had been known as “Mikoyan” from January 3, 1935 to December 12, 1957. Prior to being renamed “Mikoyan” by the Soviet government in 1935, Yeghegnadzor was known by the Turkish name of Keshishkend. Before that time, it was known as Yeghegik and Yeghyats (for further information, see Aslanyan, A. A., and H. Gh. Grgearyan. *Haykakan SSH achkharhagrakan anunneri hamarot bararan* [Short Dictionary of Geographical Names of the Armenian SSR] (Yerevan: Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, 1981), 67). Notably, as of 2021, many locals in Yeghegnadzor and neighboring Areni, including many born after the Soviet dissolution, continue to colloquially refer to the town as “Mikoyan.”

<sup>224</sup> The law was introduced by Khrushchev’s government in the aftermath of its defeat of the Anti-Party Group in June 1957, providing it with a convenient means for it to change the names of places named in honor of the disgraced officials Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich. For instance, the city of Perm in the



Mikoyan's visits to Armenia not only functioned as celebrations of the Soviet government and Soviet Armenian identity. Occasionally, they could also serve as celebrations of the Soviet *druzhba narodov* (friendship of peoples), i.e., the state policy aimed at promoting coexistence among the country's various nationalities. Mikoyan's visits to neighboring Azerbaijani communities were such cases. During his second trip to Syunik in the late 1960s, he and his Armenian associates briefly stopped at the village of Shurnukh, near Goris, where they were greeted by local Azerbaijanis with gifts of "bread and salt, a sheep slaughtered before his feet, more zurna and dhol music, dancing, and so on."<sup>225</sup> During his 1962 trip, Mikoyan and his entourage took the train from Meghri along the Iranian border and into the Zangelan raion of Soviet Azerbaijan, just south of Nagorno-Karabakh. Arriving at Minjivan, Mikoyan and his associates were greeted by a crowd of Azerbaijani onlookers and "heartily welcomed" by local leaders and A. G. Kerimov, the Vice-Chairman of Azerbaijan's Council of Ministers. Mikoyan used the occasion to emphasize peace and brotherhood between Armenia and Azerbaijan and even delivered a Caucasian toast "in honor of the indestructible friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union."<sup>226</sup> Ironically, only a few decades later, the same raion became one of the battle fronts in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>227</sup>

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Russian SFSR was known as "Molotov" from 1940 until 1957. Moreover, Khrushchev would have seen such a move as consistent with his ideological position opposed to the cult of personality that he articulated in 1956. The law set the stage for the extensive toponym changes for cities and streets named after Stalin across the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the XXII Party Congress in October 1961.

<sup>225</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 399. The zurna and the dhol are traditional wind and percussion musical instruments widely used in the Caucasus for celebratory events. Unfortunately, since the time of Mikoyan's visit to Shurnukh, its Azerbaijani population fled as a consequence of the growing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Today the village is populated mostly by Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan.

<sup>226</sup> Melik-Nubarov and Karagezyan, "Tovarishch A. I. Mikoyan," March 14, 1962, 1.

<sup>227</sup> In August 1993, Zangelan was seized from Azerbaijan by Karabakh Armenian forces. From 1993 to 2020, they administered Zangelan (also known as Kovsakan) as part of the Kashatagh district of the "outer security zone" of the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) Republic. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan viewed it as one of seven "occupied districts" surrounding Karabakh. During the 2020 Karabakh war, Zangelan was retaken by

## Dodging Raindrops in the Storm

Although Mikoyan and his Armenian network did much to enhance Armenia's economic development within the Soviet Union, particularly sensitive national problems were not easily resolvable for them. Such issues served as tests for Moscow in the nationality sphere, especially in a period of demands for an increased national expression and national autonomy from various parts of the Soviet Union.<sup>228</sup> One of the most prominent national issues facing the Soviet government in the Caucasus was the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' (NKAO).<sup>229</sup> Soviet anecdotes often poked fun at Mikoyan's ability to seemingly "dodge between the raindrops" during thunderstorms.<sup>230</sup> However, Karabakh was an especially sensitive matter and Mikoyan had to approach it cautiously. One misstep could lead to an outbreak of Armenian nationalism that could be met by nationalist reactions in neighboring Azerbaijan or Georgia. Indeed, the memory of the riots in Tbilisi, in which Mikoyan and ethnic Armenians were singled out for criticism by Georgian nationalists, still remained fresh.<sup>231</sup>

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Azerbaijani forces and it now remains under their control. For further information, see Leonidas T. Chrysanthopoulos, *Caucasus Chronicles: Nation-Building and Diplomacy in Armenia, 1993-1994* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2006), 102-106, and Arthur Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, trans. Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 114-116.

<sup>228</sup> 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*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 79-93.

<sup>229</sup> Notably, Mikoyan may have had a personal connection to Karabakh. In his memoirs, Mikoyan's son, Stepan, asserts that the ancestors of the Mikoyan family originally arrived in Lori from Karabakh in 1813, amid the Russo-Persian wars over Transcaucasia (see S. A. Mikoyan, *Stepan Anastasovich Mikoyan: An Autobiography*, 9).

<sup>230</sup> Roy Medvedev, *Oni okružhali Stalina* [They Surrounded Stalin] (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1984), 130, derived from the English translation *All Stalin's Men*, trans. Harold Shukman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984), 28.

<sup>231</sup> Giorgi Kldiashvili, "Nationalism after the March 1956 events and the origins of the national-independence movement in Georgia," and Claire P. Kaiser, "'A kind of silent protest?': Deciphering Georgia's 1956," in *Georgia after Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet power*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Timothy K. Blauvelt (London: Routledge, 2016), 82 and 102. Kaiser noted that "attacks leveled against Mikoyan in particular acquired a

Given his experience as a revolutionary in the Caucasus, Mikoyan understood that Karabakh was the one of the most fiercely contested territories between Armenians and Azerbaijanis at the time of the civil war. As a result of the British intervention in Transcaucasia, Karabakh came under Azerbaijani rule and remained so by the time that the Bolsheviks arrived in the region. The Bolsheviks originally planned to transfer Karabakh to the jurisdiction of Soviet Armenia as an incentive to undermine the Dashnak-led rebellion in neighboring Zangezur. On July 4, 1921, the Caucasus Bureau (*Kavburo*) voted to transfer Karabakh to Armenia, an initiative supported by Armenian Bolshevik Aleksandr Myasnikyan. However, it reversed its decision the next day, opting to leave the territory under Azerbaijani control while giving the Armenians the concession of local autonomy. Caucasus scholar Arsène Saparov argues that the reversal was due to the defeat of the Zangezur rebellion, combined with pressure from Azerbaijani Bolshevik leader Nariman Narimanov.<sup>232</sup> In her memoirs, Olga Shatunovskaia further asserted that Narimanov received crucial support from Nationalities Commissar Iosif Stalin in his efforts to influence the Kavburo.<sup>233</sup> Grigory Lezhava and Georgi Derluguian argue that Stalin supported Narimanov due to the concerns of the Georgian Bolsheviks regarding the implications of the Karabakh decision. They feared that similar demands would be

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

<sup>232</sup> For the best explanation on the origins of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, see Arsène Saparov, “Why Autonomy?: The Making of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, 1918–1925,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64 (2012): 281-323.

<sup>233</sup> Olga Shatunovskaia, *Ob ushedshem veke* [About the Past Century], ed. Zhana Kutyina, Andrei Broydo, and Anton Kutyin (La Jolla, CA: DAA Books, 2001), 119.

advanced by ethnically and culturally distinct territories in their republic, such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Adjara, and Armenian-inhabited areas like Javakheti.<sup>234</sup>

The potential tensions in the compromise resolution on Karabakh were amplified by political shifts within the Azerbaijan SSR. There were two factions in the republic's Party leadership – one that viewed Azerbaijan as a nation-state for the Azerbaijani Turks, and another, descended from the revolutionaries of the Baku Commune, that viewed Azerbaijan as a multiethnic republic. The latter faction enjoyed significant influence during NEP but lost much of it during the Stalin era. As the local Azerbaijani Party leadership increasingly identified with Turkic nationalism, the pressures to reduce the autonomy of minorities in the republic, including Karabakh Armenians, increased.<sup>235</sup> Mikoyan was apprised of such trends through Soviet Armenian officials with roots in Karabakh, such as Yeghishe Astsatryan. During a September 1963 meeting in Pitsunda, Mikoyan inquired to Astsatryan about the quality of life in Karabakh. Astsatryan detailed efforts by Yerevan to assist Karabakh Armenian students who sought to study in Armenia, as well as recent infrastructure improvements in the oblast' led by his native village of Chartar and the head of its collective farm Suren Adamyan.<sup>236</sup> “[His work] is very good,” remarked Mikoyan, “the people of Karabakh are very capable people.”<sup>237</sup>

However, Astsatryan could not hide the reality. “Yes, these achievements are great, but they are rare,” he told Mikoyan. “The economy of Karabakh is at its lowest point since

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<sup>234</sup> Georgi Derlugian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 186-187.

<sup>235</sup> For an overview on developments in Azerbaijan during the NEP and Stalin eras, especially from the perspective of non-titular minorities, see Krista A. Goff, *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 19-59.

<sup>236</sup> Hamlet Harutyunyan's edited volume *Nakhagahe. Suren Adamyane zhamanakakitsneri husherum* [The Chairman: Suren Adamyan in the Memories of His Contemporaries] (Yerevan: Zangak, 2010) provides an overview of Adamyan's activities from an Armenian perspective.

<sup>237</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 81-82.

the 1930s. There are no roads, and no funds for irrigation, electrification, and mechanization of agricultural work. Despite the over-fulfillment of the Five-Year Plans in the rest of the country, the economic development of Karabakh is largely behind that of Azerbaijan. The same is true of education and culture. The youth is being forced to leave the region and move away.”<sup>238</sup> When Mikoyan asked about the possibility of the local leadership developing the province’s economy, Astsatryan noted that they would need to devise a comprehensive development plan for the region. “They need to allocate funds for such a project and to consistently demand its implementation, and the Azerbaijani leadership will not do this because they do not want to do so,” he said. “They strive to force the inhabitants to emigrate from Karabakh as they did from Nakhichevan.”<sup>239</sup>

Mikoyan took these charges seriously. In the early 1960s, his son, Sergo recalled an incident in which his father angrily reprimanded an Azerbaijani Party official over Baku’s treatment of the Karabakh Armenians at the family dacha. To Mikoyan, the policies of the Azerbaijan Party leadership were expressions of chauvinism and very blatant violations of the spirit of the Soviet nationality policy that he championed. In his view, Baku’s policies seemingly created the explosive potential for a nationalist conflict in the Caucasus. However, the official, known as Shirali, was a “zealous and intelligent man” who “repeated the claims of the officials in Baku who did not understand the essence of the matter.” Sergo stressed that “he was supposed to understand that it was an issue of great importance. Maybe he had other motives, such as using the defense of Karabakh as a means

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 83.

of climbing the political ladder and becoming the First Secretary of the Central Committee of Azerbaijan. I do not know.”<sup>240</sup>

Referring to allegations of neglect and national discrimination in the administration of Karabakh, Shirali said that “the authorities in Baku could make mistakes, but he guaranteed that all the shortcomings would be eliminated.” This response incensed the normally calm Anastas Ivanovich, who angrily said “that the authorities in Baku were to blame for everything.” He added “that they failed to create jobs and higher and technical educational institutions and that, in general, they appeared to be doing everything in their power to push the Armenians out of Karabakh, just as they had pushed them out of Nakhichevan.” He further stressed that “it is very bad, if you have such a goal in Baku. In that case, [the demands of] the Karabakh Armenians can be easily understood.” Shirali attempted to assuage Mikoyan and told him that Baku had no such goal and that the “raikom secretary of the autonomous oblast’ was an indecisive man who, like all the other local secretaries, was unable to solve all the issues.” Shirali then invited Sergo to fly to Baku that same day. “Your father is very revered by us. Won’t you be my personal guest?” he asked. “The insincerity was obvious,” recalled Sergo. “My father answered for me instead and said that I was very busy, and that, in general, I have other plans. The insincerity remained. The deputy was cleverly chosen [by Baku]. He was smart, educated, knew what to say, and knew how to dodge the answers to complex questions. He continued making empty promises and described the ways in which the Armenians live well in Karabakh.”<sup>241</sup>

Given the poor treatment of Karabakh by Azerbaijan, the idea of transferring Karabakh to Soviet Armenia began to be periodically raised by both Karabakh Armenian

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<sup>240</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 123-124.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

representatives and the Soviet Armenian leadership. Moreover, Mikoyan also warned to such initiatives and supported those sponsored by Yerevan. However, they were consistently opposed by Baku, which exercised its veto enshrined in Article 18 of the Soviet constitution, mandating that “the territory of the union republics could not be changed without their consent.”<sup>242</sup> Even though Khrushchev’s 1954 transfer of Crimea to Soviet Ukraine served as a powerful reminder that internal border adjustments were possible, the transfer was ultimately based on a mutual agreement between Moscow and Kiev. By contrast, any initiative to transfer Karabakh to Armenia was always met by opposition from Baku on the basis of Karabakh’s cultural and economic importance for Azerbaijan, leaving the issue perpetually unresolved.

During the late Stalin era, the Karabakh issue was briefly raised by First Secretary Arutinov, who advocating transferring the oblast’ to Armenia. However, his appeal was vetoed by Baku.<sup>243</sup> The liberalized space for political and cultural expression in the wake of Stalin’s death seemingly presented new opportunities for the Karabakh Armenians. Discussions soon began on the issue among Armenian intellectuals. In Yerevan, Armenian historian John Kirakosyan frequently engaged Sergo Mikoyan on the subject. “Once I went to another topic,” recalled Sergo, “but he [Kirakosyan] interrupted me. ‘We shouldn’t waste time on empty talk. We must talk only about Karabakh, Armenia and their problems.’”<sup>244</sup> During Khrushchev’s visit to Armenia in May 1961, Yakov Zarobyan raised the issue with him in the presence of representatives of the Armenian Diaspora. According

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<sup>242</sup> L. I. Mandelshtam, ed. *Sbornik zakonov SSSR i ukazov prezidiuma verkhovnogo soveta SSSR (1938 – iul’ 1956 gg.)* [Collection of Laws of the USSR and Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1938 – July 1956)] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1956), 5.

<sup>243</sup> Maike Lehmann, “The Local Reinvention of the Soviet Project Nation and Socialism in the Republic of Armenia after 1945,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge*, 59, no. 4 (2011): 489-493. See also Goff, *Nested Nationalism*, 81.

<sup>244</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 122.

to Astsatryan and Nikita Zarobyan, this strategy was a deliberate move to demonstrate to Khrushchev the unity of the Armenian people, the power of the politically influential Diaspora, and the importance of the Karabakh question to all Armenians.<sup>245</sup> However, Khrushchev fully understood that Moscow could not endorse the transfer of Karabakh to Armenia without the mutual consent of Baku. Therefore, although he listened attentively to Zarobyan, the best that he could promise would be to “discuss this issue in the future.”<sup>246</sup> Zarobyan felt that his strategy had backfired and that the presence of Diaspora representatives had actually produced the opposite intended effect on Khrushchev.<sup>247</sup> Astsatryan later related this episode to Mikoyan during their 1963 Pitsunda meeting.<sup>248</sup>

In May 1964, Karabakh Armenian representatives sent a petition to Khrushchev enumerating their grievances with official Baku and requesting the oblast’s transfer from the jurisdiction of Soviet Azerbaijan to that of Soviet Armenia, framing their demands in Soviet ideological terms.<sup>249</sup> The issue was raised again the following year, by participants of the 1965 Armenian Genocide demonstrations in Yerevan.<sup>250</sup> In 1966, the Karabakh issue was raised again by Anton Kochinyan, by then Armenia’s First Secretary, with the “warm support” of Mikoyan, then in his final months as a member of the Politburo, for finding a “positive resolution to the issue.”<sup>251</sup> In March, 1,906 intellectual and cultural

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<sup>245</sup> Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha*, 121-122.

<sup>246</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 33. In his memoirs, Yeghishe Astsatryan noted that the territorial issues of historical Turkish Armenia and Nakhichevan were also discussed at this meeting. He recalled Khrushchev giving a different, but no less evasive, response: “It is difficult to resolve the question of the Armenian lands in Turkey without provoking a military conflict. As for Nakhichevan and Karabakh, these areas, which were transferred to Azerbaijan, are part of Soviet territory and we have a single Soviet indivisible border.” (see: Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 173.)

<sup>247</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 33.

<sup>248</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 83.

<sup>249</sup> Gerard J. Libaridian, ed. *The Karabagh File: Documents and Facts on the Question of Mountainous Karabagh, 1918-1988* (Cambridge, MA: The Zoryan Institute, 1988), 42-46.

<sup>250</sup> Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism,” 24.

<sup>251</sup> Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 421. For Kochinyan’s full personal account on his efforts to resolve the Karabakh dispute in favor of Soviet Armenia, see: Kochinyan, *Anavart husher*, 405-428.



figures from the Armenian SSR signed and sent an appeal the XXIII Party Congress of the CPSU, requesting the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. The appeal, which had the personal backing of Kochinyan, “included a proposal to have the accession of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia coincide with the anniversary of the Sovietization of Armenia on November 29, 1966.”<sup>252</sup> However, in the final outcome, the request of the signatories was effectively veto once again by Baku.

Despite his support for such initiatives, Mikoyan nevertheless understood that no resolution to the matter could be realized without Baku’s consent. He expressed this sentiment when Astsatryan inquired about the possibility of having Moscow manage Karabakh’s economy directly during their 1963 Pitsunda meeting. Noting Baku’s opposition in accordance with Article 18 of the Soviet constitution, Mikoyan told Astsatryan that “the Azerbaijani leadership does not want such a scenario, the Karabakh leadership cannot ask for it, and Armenia has no right to interfere in the sovereign affairs of another republic. The question is fundamentally incorrect. The Armenian-populated area of this Armenian territory must be joined to Armenia in order to plan and implement the economic, scientific-technical, cultural-educational development of the province within the framework of national planning.” Astsatryan then asked Mikoyan about his decision to sign the decree to transfer Crimea to Ukraine. Mikoyan smiled and replied: “I did not sign the decision on Crimea. Khrushchev suggested that I sign it, but I explained to him that it was Russia’s territory and that I had no right to sign such a decree.”<sup>253</sup>

In the end, no resolution materialized on Karabakh and even a high Kremlin official like Mikoyan was unable to influence the process in this regard. Although his work in

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<sup>252</sup> Zarobyan, *Yakov Zarobyan i ego epokha*, 139-140.

<sup>253</sup> Astsatryan, *XX dar*, 83-84.

Armenia highlighted the republic as a model of the Soviet nationality policy, Karabakh proved to be another matter entirely. This limitation was partially due to Mikoyan's own limited ability to influence the outcome, regardless of his high position within Soviet politics. "As an Armenian, my father understood that he should be alert to his background and understand his limitations," recalled Sergo. "And he always remembered this during different negotiations. That is why he could not appeal to Khrushchev to hand over Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia."<sup>254</sup> However, a much more significant factor in determining the outcome on Karabakh was the reality of the Soviet state structure. Any decision to change inter-republican boundaries within the USSR was ultimately contingent on the consent of both republics involved, as mandated by Article 18 of the Soviet constitution. For Russia and Ukraine, finding mutual agreement over Crimea was one matter. For Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a common agreement on Karabakh was another. The tension remained unresolved, and the frustrations of the Armenian population continued to simmer, eventually exploding during Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*. Notably, at that time, it was Sergo Mikoyan who became one of the earliest and most vocal advocates for unification between Armenia and Karabakh.<sup>255</sup>

## Conclusions

In the late 1960s, at his suburban Moscow dacha, Marshal Ivan Baghramyan held a dinner for Mikoyan in his honor. At the start of the meal, he pointed out to his guests "that the Armenian people mistakenly believed that Mikoyan did little in his capacity for Armenia,

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<sup>254</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *Hayrs Anastas Mikoyane*, 173.

<sup>255</sup> Libaridian, ed. *The Karabagh File*, 69 and 73-77, and Mark Malkasian, "*Gha-ra-bagh!*": *The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 28-29.

but that the facts told a different story.”<sup>256</sup> In fact, as Baghramyan alluded, Mikoyan’s involvement in Armenian affairs was extensive. Viewing economic achievement as an indicator of the successful implementation of the Soviet nationality policy, he sought to highlight Armenia as a model for audiences foreign and domestic. His work in Armenia fostered the rise of a patronage network that included officials like Zarobyan, Kochinyan, and Astsatryan who shared a common interest in Armenia’s economic and cultural development. In his collaborative work with these Armenian officials, Mikoyan blurred the hierarchies commonly associated with empires, as defined by Burbank and Cooper, indicating more the “mobilizational state” model suggested by Adeb Khalid.

Mikoyan’s Armenian network was forged in his work as a both an advocate and advisor for Yerevan. As an advocate, he used his high-level position and close contacts with Khrushchev to lobby on his network’s behalf when it needed assistance. In his capacity as an advisor, he would frequently consult with these Armenian officials whenever they visited Moscow, inquiring about developments in the republic and offering advice on how to properly frame a proposal to Gosplan or the Supreme Soviet. Moreover, he would regularly check-in on major economic projects and offer suggestions or feedback solicited by the Armenian authorities. Official receptions of Mikoyan in Armenia, which projected the power of the Soviet state, would also be complemented by bottom-up expressions of nationalism from the Armenian public, given popular perceptions of Mikoyan as a symbol of Armenian achievement within the Soviet Union. However, despite Mikoyan’s position as a patron for Armenia in Moscow, not every issue could be resolved in Yerevan’s favor, as the challenge of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem illustrated. Moreover, although

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<sup>256</sup> Arushanyan, *Yakov Zarobyane im husherum*, 34.

Mikoyan strove to highlight his native republic as a model of the Soviet nationality policy's successes, his concerns were not only limited to Armenia or the union republics generally, as his advocacy for return of the deported peoples of the North Caucasus will reveal.

## Chapter 4: National Encounters in the North Caucasus

Mikoyan's contributions to the development of Thaw-era Soviet nationality reforms reflected his inclusive attitude toward difference throughout his long career.<sup>1</sup> Outside of Armenia, nowhere was this association more apparent than in his advocacy for the rehabilitation of Chechens and the Ingush, both victims of wartime Stalinist deportations. However, opposition to the return of deported peoples and the restoration of their autonomous entities was considerable among Soviet security officials. Moreover, although Moscow allowed for the return of most of these nationalities, there were exceptions in the cases of other groups, most notably the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans. When the Soviet government finally did launch the process of return and restoration for the Chechens and the Ingush, it was confronted with new challenges in the form of territorial and property disputes. In these instances, the Stalinist authoritarian legacy complicated the efforts by Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and other Soviet state officials to forge a new path for the USSR in the nationality sphere. It is a history that demonstrates that the Khrushchev government's adoption of a policy favoring greater national expression was highly contested politically within the Soviet leadership, and that the return of deported peoples was wrought with antagonisms and practical difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Mikoyan's son, Sergo recalled that in Estonia, his father had earned the respect of the local population by recognizing their country as "a special republic with its own traditions and interests," and not treating it condescendingly "like a 'younger brother'" or "a mute part of the Soviet Union." He recalled similar attitudes toward his father from the people of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. See Sergo A. Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November*, ed. by Svetlana Savranskaya (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012), 24.

<sup>2</sup> Conflicts over the direction of the nationality policy within the Soviet leadership will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. This conflict was also expressed in the struggle between Moscow and the union republics over defining the parameters of acceptable national expression, which scholars have dubbed a "tug of war." For more background on this phenomenon, see Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie Kivelson, *Russia's Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 330; and 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*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 79–93.

Although Mikoyan demonstrated a broad concern for the peoples of the North Caucasus generally, this chapter focuses on his role in the rehabilitation of the Chechens and the Ingush in particular. The specific focus on the latter two groups is guided both by the extent of available historical evidence and the particular interest that Mikoyan took in the fate of these peoples. During the era of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 1920s, it was Mikoyan who played a leading role in the establishment of Chechnia and Ingushetia as autonomous entities, and in the process, he developed a personal connection with the local elites of these republics. In 1944, Mikoyan was the sole voice of objection to Stalin and Beria's proposal to deport the Chechens and the Ingush to Central Asia. During the Thaw, Mikoyan oversaw the restoration of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR and the return and rehabilitation of these peoples to their native lands. The conflicts that were associated with their return also provide the opportunity to examine the response of the Soviet state in the context of other Thaw-era cases of nationality-related unrest.

The chapter commences by contextualizing Mikoyan's efforts on the rehabilitation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples in his earlier work as the First Secretary of the North Caucasus Territory during the 1920s. It was through Mikoyan's governorship of this region that he had his first experience with practically managing difference and promoting autonomy, literacy, and cultural and national expression among its indigenous peoples, in line with the Soviet policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativization).<sup>3</sup> It left him with experiences that would prove valuable in his work to rehabilitate the deported North Caucasus nationalities

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<sup>3</sup> The idea of *korenizatsiia* refers to the "twin policies of promoting national languages and national elites" in the context of the USSR in the 1920s. For more background on this concept, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 10-12.

decades later during the Thaw.<sup>4</sup> The chapter then explores the top-down efforts by Khrushchev's government to rehabilitate and return the deported peoples, as well as the bottom-up efforts by these groups to achieve the return to their native lands and to enjoy the restoration of their autonomous republics. Particular attention will be paid to Mikoyan's role, especially his May 1956 meeting with a delegation of Chechen and Ingush representatives at the Kremlin, led by Chechen linguist Iunus Desheriev and Ingush writer Idris Bazorkin. It will also demonstrate that efforts to return the deported nationalities were met with significant opposition by state security officials, in particular KGB Chief Ivan Serov, underscoring that even the return of groups like the Chechens and Ingush was highly contested. However, it will also reveal that developments on the ground in the region, notably the unauthorized return of the deportees and the growing tensions with other national communities, forced the security officials to drop their opposition to the restoration of Checheno-Ingushetia. The focus of the chapter will then shift toward the efforts by the Khrushchev government to manage the return of these groups and its decision to exclude certain deported nationalities from this process, notably the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans. It will also argue that Mikoyan played a central role in the rehabilitation of the deported peoples through the formation of the "Mikoyan Commission" in July 1956, including efforts to manage the Ingush-Ossetian territorial conflict over the Prigorodnyi raion. The chapter will conclude by examining the response of the Khrushchev government to the tensions between the region's Slavic inhabitants and Chechen and Ingush returnees.

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<sup>4</sup> As Sergo Mikoyan wrote, it was through his father's governorship of the North Caucasus that "he learned to win the respect of different nations by in turn showing respect for [their] languages, cultures, and traditions." He noted that it was during that time that his father "formed his habitual practice of honoring different nations, beliefs, traditions, and customs that he encountered in his political work" (see S. A. Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 13).

## Mikoyan and the Birth of Chechnia

At the beginning of the 1920s, after four years of violence and civil war, the Soviet state needed to stabilize and secure its authority in the North Caucasus.<sup>5</sup> In his post as First Secretary of the North Caucasus, Mikoyan's task was to lead the effort in rebuilding the area, bringing together its various groups, particularly the Cossacks and the North Caucasian peoples. To that end, he actively promoted the idea of partitioning the large Gorskaia, or Mountain, ASSR into individual autonomous entities for the peoples of the region. The Gorskaia ASSR, was "not a national republic, but a republic of nationalities," as Mikoyan wrote in 1922.<sup>6</sup> It encompassed "a large group of North Caucasian mountain peoples: Chechens, Ingush, Kabardins, Ossetians, Balkars, Karachais, as well as part of the villages of the Terek Cossacks." As Mikoyan recalled, "these peoples were very different and among some of them, ethnic tensions still remained."<sup>7</sup>

As a result of the gradual dissolution of this large entity, the Soviet government effectively "fathered" several national republics that form the contemporary Russian North

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<sup>5</sup> On the Civil War in the North Caucasus, see the following: Dmitrii Korenev, *Revoliutsiia na Tereke 1917–1918 gody* [Revolution on the Terek, 1917–1918]. (Ordzhonikidze: Severo-Osetinskoe, 1967) and Valerii Dzdizoev, *Ot Soiuznogo obedinennikh gor'tev Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana do Gorskoi ASSR (1917–1924 gg.): nachal'nyi etap natsional'no-osudarstvenno o stroitel'stvo narodov Severnogo Kavkaza v XX veke* [From the Union of the United Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Dagestan to the Mountain ASSR (1917–1924): The Initial Stage of Nation-State Building of the Peoples of the North Caucasus in the 20th Century]. (Vladikavkaz: Izd-vo Severo-Osetinskogo gos. Universiteta, 2003). For the best overview in English, see Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London: Routledge, 2012), 51-146.

<sup>6</sup> L. S. Gatagova, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Rogovaia, eds., *TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsionalnyi vopros. Kniga 1: 1918–1933 gg.* [Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and the National Question, Book I, 1918–1933]. (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), 84. For more on the Gorskaia Republic, see Abdulla Daudov, *Gorskaia ASSR (1921–1924gg.). Ocherki sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi istorii* [Gorskaia ASSR (1921–1924): Sketches on Social-Economic History] (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o Minuvshem* [So It Was: Reflections on the Past] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2014), 244-245. An exhaustive examination on the historical relationships among the various peoples of the region before NEP is beyond the scope of this study, but for a concise overview of the region before Soviet rule, see Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 10-34.



Caucasus. This is not to say that the Soviet state merely created nations *ex nihilo*, on the whim of officials like Mikoyan. There were cultural, historical, and linguistic bases for the creation of these entities and local elites actively assisted the state in the effort to consolidate these groups into “imagined” national communities.<sup>8</sup> Mikoyan acknowledged this reality in a speech that he delivered in Rostov-on-Don in June 1925, in which he declared that in contrast to Transcaucasia, with its three dominant nations – Armenians, Georgians, Azerbaijanis – the North Caucasus lacked “fully formed nations” and that national identities were “only just beginning to take shape.” “It is most interesting that Soviet power creates nations,” he observed, adding that it “helps individual tribes take shape as nations.” In the North Caucasus, he said, “we have tribes, not nations – perhaps you have a national identity as such, but not a nation.” Significantly, Karachai scholar and Bolshevik revolutionary Umar Aliev endorsed Mikoyan’s speech and used it as the preface of his 1926 book on the nationality question in the North Caucasus.<sup>9</sup>

The dissolution of the Gorskaia ASSR was already underway even before Mikoyan’s arrival. Throughout 1922, the Soviet government carved new national entities for the Kabardins, Balkars, Karachai, and Cherkess out of the Gorskaia ASSR.<sup>10</sup> By the

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<sup>8</sup> For the two best studies on local elite involvement in creating Soviet nations (both in the context of Central Asia), see Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), and Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, “Vmesto predisloviia (Rech’ tov. Mikoyana) [Instead of a Preface (Speech by Comrade Mikoyan),” in *Natsionalnyi vopros i natsionalnaia kultura v Severo-Kavkazskom krae (itogi i perspektivy) k predstoiashchemu s’ezdu gorskikh narodov* [The National Question and National Culture in the North Caucasus Region: Results and Prospects for the Upcoming Congress of Mountain Peoples], Umar Aliev (Rostov-on-Don: Sevkavkniga, Kraynatsizdat, 1926), 9. For more on Aliev, see K. Laipanov and M. Batchaev, *Umar Aliev* (Cherkessk: Karachai-Cherkesskoe otdelenie Staropol’skogo knizhnogo izdatel’stva, 1986), and Ian Lanzillotti, “Land, Community, and the State in the North Caucasus: Kabardino-Balkaria, 1763-1991” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2014), 393-397 and 595-598.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, trans. Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 83-84. See also Lanzillotti, “Land, Community, and the State in the North Caucasus,” 339-340.

end of 1922, Mikoyan believed that the situation in Chechnia warranted its separation from the Gorskaia ASSR as well. As he recalled in his memoirs:

The situation in Chechnia was very tense at that time. The remnants of anti-Soviet elements were operating throughout the area and they encouraged Chechens to oppose the Soviet regime. They also organized bandits that led attacks on the outskirts of Groznyi as well as on oil fields, railway stations, and trains. There were cases of killings of Soviet workers in Chechen villages. Many of these bandits continued operating in Chechnia, even after banditry in our region was largely eliminated.<sup>11</sup>

In a report to Central Committee on the situation in the Gorskaia ASSR from October 1922, Mikoyan wrote that the situation in Chechnia and Ingushetia was “becoming progressively worse every day and inspires great concern.” The situation was so bad that representatives of the government could not even set foot in Chechnia “without risk to their own lives.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Mikoyan wrote decades later, “not only was there no solid power throughout Chechnia, but there was no Soviet power at all.”<sup>13</sup>

To the Armenian Mikoyan, the solution to these persistent problems seemed obvious. In order to firmly establish Soviet rule in Chechnia, he reasoned that the Chechens should feel that they have a stake in the system. To that end, they should be granted political and cultural autonomy, independent of the Gorskaia ASSR. “Even in Chechnia itself,” Mikoyan later recalled, “there were more and more urgent requests from the region’s most active Party and non-Party comrades, especially from the Komsomol members. They wanted us to strengthen their power and grant them local autonomy.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, within the administration of the Gorskaia ASSR, there was scant Party representation

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<sup>11</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 246.

<sup>12</sup> Gatagova, et al., *TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsionalnyi vopros*, 84-85.

<sup>13</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 246.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

among the Chechens and the Ingush. While the organs of governance were dominated by Ossetians and Russians, “not a single Chechen or Ingush sat on the local *sovnarkom*, and not a single Chechen was enrolled in the local party schools.”<sup>15</sup> In such an arrangement, Mikoyan noted in his October 1922 report, “the Chechens and Ingush do not feel themselves to be empowered. Instead, they feel powerless and resent being in a republic ruled by Ossetians and Russians – representatives of numerically smaller peoples.”<sup>16</sup> Mikoyan raised the autonomy question with Dzerzhinskii:

I told him that the reason for the tense situation in Chechnia was the lack of any real Soviet work there. The Mountain Republic cannot cope with such conditions. I said that it was necessary to establish a Chechen national autonomy, led by the Chechens themselves, and only then would the situation in Chechnia be somewhat defused. Dzerzhinskii supported us.<sup>17</sup>

In Moscow, Mikoyan subsequently discussed his proposal with Stalin that same month. “He reacted approvingly to the idea,” he recalled, “but warned of the need to exercise caution and to learn the true mood of the population.”<sup>18</sup>

The next concrete step was the establishment of a commission to explore the possibility of granting autonomy to the Chechen people. Established in October 1922, only days after Mikoyan sent his report to the Central Committee, the commission included Mikoyan, Kliment Voroshilov, and Sergei Kirov.<sup>19</sup> “It worked in Vladikavkaz but traveled to the area in order to become acquainted with the actual state of affairs,” recalled Mikoyan. “The leading workers of the Gorskaia ASSR took part in its work.” Once the commission

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<sup>15</sup> Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 163.

<sup>16</sup> Gatagova, et al., *TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsionalnyi vopros*, 84.

<sup>17</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 246.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Abdulla Daudov and Julietta Meskhidze, *Natsional'naia gosudarstvennost' gorskikh narodov Severnogo Kavkaza (1917-1924)* [National Statehood of the Mountain Peoples of the North Caucasus]. (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2009), 176.

completed its work, it formally “submitted a proposal to the Party Central Committee to separate Chechnia from the Gorskaia ASSR into an autonomous region with its governing bodies in Groznyi.”<sup>20</sup> The Soviet government also established a Chechen Revkom, comprised of seven non-Party and six Party representatives who enjoyed the support and trust of the Chechen population. The proposal for the creation of an autonomous Chechnia was formally accepted by the Soviet government and realized on November 30, 1922 by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee.<sup>21</sup> As historian Alex Marshall observed, the establishment of an autonomous Chechen republic “ironically also made these profoundly Soviet political figures [i.e., Mikoyan and his colleagues] the true founding fathers of the modern Chechen state.”<sup>22</sup>

However, problems continued to persist. Although the Soviet government established Groznyi as the administrative center of Chechnia, the city existed as a separate, autonomous self-governing entity. The Soviet leadership initially decided not to include it within Chechnia for ethnographic reasons, given the city’s Russian majority.<sup>23</sup> However, the lack of a strong regional center in Chechnia left the new republic poor and left Groznyi insecure. The Chechen Revkom did not have sufficient funds to support the construction of schools and vital infrastructure, and it received no funds from Groznyi’s industrial production. The North Caucasus regional budget allocated some funds to the Chechen Revkom, but according to Mikoyan, “they were not great.” Even worse, Groznyi, which

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<sup>20</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 247.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>22</sup> Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 164.

<sup>23</sup> According to the 1926 Soviet census, 71% of the population of Groznyi were ethnic Russians, followed by Ukrainians (8%), Armenians (6%), Tatars (3%), Jews (3%), and only then Chechens (2%). Together, East Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) comprised 80% of the population of the Groznyi raion. For the full census results for Groznyi, see: Statistical Office of the North Caucasus Krai, *Poselennye itogi perepisi 1926 goda po Severo-Kavkazskomu kraiu* [Settled Results of the 1926 Census in the North Caucasus Krai] (Rostov-on-Don: Gostipografiia im. Kominterna Sekkavpolygraftresta, 1929), 440.

was surrounded geographically by Chechnia, was subject to frequent raids by Chechen bandits. Chechen First Chairman Tashtemir Elderkhanov and other Revkom members brought these grievances to Mikoyan who, in turn, raised these issues with Moscow:

In Moscow, I told the Central Committee of the Party and the government that many Chechens viewed Grozny as an alien city. Therefore, the raids launched on the city by bandits were not condemned by the Chechens. In fact, many of the bandits were well-known to everybody. They freely strutted around the villages like dashing heroes and the population viewed their banditry with admiration, as a form of daring. Nothing will change until the Chechen people and the Chechen Soviet authorities begin the fight this banditry themselves. I told them that it was necessary to somehow interest the Chechens financially and to make the Chechen budget contingent on the success of the Grozny oil industry. It was necessary for Grozny to become part of autonomous Chechnia.<sup>24</sup>

Grozny would eventually be directly incorporated into Chechnia in 1928, strengthening the republic financially with its oil industry, along with the Sunzha raion.<sup>25</sup> However, until that time, Chechnia and Grozny reached an agreement whereby a portion of the revenue from Grozny's oil production would be allocated to the Chechen Revkom. The amount received from oil revenues would be tied to the damages that the bandits inflicted on Grozny, thereby allowing Chechen leaders to blame the bandits for "robbing the budget of the autonomous oblast" and thus depriving their compatriots of a valuable source of "income and funds necessary for the construction of schools, roads, hospitals, and more." This approach began to achieve results, as Revkom members traveled throughout Chechnia, talking to locals and underscoring the damage that the bandits inflicted on the local economy. "This had a major impact," recalled Mikoyan. "The revenues of the Revkom increased, its influence strengthened, and the Chechen population

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<sup>24</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 249.

<sup>25</sup> Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, 91.

became attracted to the fight against the bandits. The robberies in Grozny almost stopped. This was a great achievement in improving the situation in Chechnia and Grozny.”<sup>26</sup>

Banditry (i.e., robbery or outlaw activity) persisted against local railway networks. The problem was resolved when Mikoyan, together with the Chechen Revkom, and a prominent former bandit leader worked to thwart the robbers. “By the end of 1924 and the beginning of 1925, calm came to Chechnia,” Mikoyan recalled. However, although Chechnia was at peace, the fact that many Chechens remained armed was a concern to the Soviet government. In his memoirs, Mikoyan recollected a meeting with Dzerzhinskii in which he expressed concern that foreign powers – specifically Poland’s Marshal Piłsudski – would attempt to use Chechnia to de-stabilize the Soviet Union. “To be completely calm,” Dzerzhinskii told Mikoyan, “it is necessary to disarm Chechnia.” After securing the support of Stalin, Rykov, and the Politburo, Mikoyan, together with the military and the OGPU, organized a plan to disarm Chechnia in the spring of 1925. Once executed, the operation went smoothly, with relatively few casualties on both sides.<sup>27</sup>

In the process of securing Soviet authority in Chechnia, Mikoyan offered both “carrots” and “sticks” to the local population. While working with the military and security forces to disarm the bandits, he coupled this approach with a generous position towards the Chechen national and cultural expression, in line with the policy of *korenizatsiia*. Of his father’s approach, Sergo Mikoyan later recalled that rather than issue dry orders, he used persuasion, economic stimuli, appeals to century-old traditions and consideration for these traditions in his work.”<sup>28</sup> In other circumstances and contexts, the extent of Mikoyan’s

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<sup>26</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 249.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 249-253, and Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 171-173.

<sup>28</sup> S. A. Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, 13.

generosity would be unthinkable. In February 1924, he noted that in Chechnia, “the Bolsheviks had departed further from ‘pure’ Soviet principles of governance than anywhere else in the country, up to and including the radical step of inviting representatives of the Islamic clergy into government.”<sup>29</sup>

The implementation of *korenizatsiia* often followed practical needs. In the Chechnia of the NEP-era USSR, very few people knew Russian, or any other language, aside from their native Chechen. Therefore, in order to quickly organize new party cadres to occupy administrative posts, the Soviet government placed greater stress on learning and perfecting Chechen. Moreover, although it was easy for Chechnia’s religious leaders to oppose Russian in favor of Arabic, it was more difficult for them to oppose instruction in their national tongue.<sup>30</sup> “When I was in Chechnia,” Mikoyan recalled in 1925, “I said that you need to write in Chechen instead of Arabic. Not a single mullah could object, although almost all were supportive of Arabic and opposed the use of Chechen. However, if I said that we do not want Arabic, but we need Russian, then he would find something to say.”<sup>31</sup>

In the end, the effort by the Soviet government “to publish textbooks in Chechen and to

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<sup>29</sup> Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 164. Although a nonbeliever, Mikoyan was generally more tolerant towards religion than other Soviet leaders, not only in the Chechen context, but in the Armenian one as well. During his 1958 trip to Armenia, at a reception in Yerevan, the republic’s leadership arranged for him to meet the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Armenian Church, Vazgen I. Mikoyan poured a glass of wine and walked over to the Catholicos, accompanied by the Armenian leadership. As he recalled: “Approaching the Catholicos, I greeted and, smiling, said in a joking manner, that I felt some guilt before the Armenian church because I did not live up to her hopes and efforts invested in my education. ‘Speaking in the language of economics,’ I said, ‘as a student of the Armenian Theological Academy, I turned out to be a ‘faulty product.’ Everyone laughed. The Catholicos smiled and responded, ‘You are mistaken! We are not only not upset with you, but we are even proud that a man like you left the walls of our academy. If only we had a few more ‘faulty products!’” (A. I. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 48.)

<sup>30</sup> According to Anna Zelkina in her study on the Sufi response to the Russian expansion into the North Caucasus, Arabic learning never became as developed in Chechnia and Ingushetia as it did in Dagestan. Nevertheless, according to Zelkina, most local mullahs would have had a basic understanding of Arabic that was “transmitted almost exclusively by visiting scholars from Dagestan and, more rarely, Karbada.” For further information, see Anna Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom: The Sufi Response to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 2000, 35.

<sup>31</sup> Mikoyan, “Vmesto predisloviia (Rech’ tov. Mikoyana),” 12.

organize courses for teaching the Chechen script” ultimately “paid off” in the words of Mikoyan.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, it did. *Korenizatsiia* in Chechnia, including the deferential approach toward local language, contributed to the growth of Party cadres. As Alex Marshall notes, by 1924, “61 per cent of workers in [Chechnia’s] central apparatus [were] now of Chechen nationality,” which was a striking contrast to its North Caucasus neighbors.<sup>33</sup>

Even after stepping down from the North Caucasus governorship, Mikoyan never forgot the region, and never forgot his own advocacy for promoting autonomy for the Chechens and other groups. At the risk of his own standing within the Soviet leadership, he even attempted to defend them, albeit to no avail, during their tragic deportation to Central Asia by Soviet authorities in 1944. The architect for the mass expulsion of Chechens, Ingush, and other nationalities was Lavrentii Beria, Stalin’s feared head of the NKVD. A fellow Georgian, Beria earlier demonstrated his capacity for ruthless brutality in the Caucasus, as the head of Soviet Georgia in the 1930s. Many historians believe that it was Beria who orchestrated the poisoning of the popular Abkhaz leader Nestor Lakoba in 1934. Although Beria eulogized Lakoba as a “great Bolshevik leader,” he quickly turned on him posthumously, condemning him as an “enemy of the people.” He went on to order the torture and murder his young wife and their three teenage sons. Beria followed this act by flooding Abkhazia with Georgian settlers, making the Abkhaz a minority in their native land and sowing the seeds for the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict that would later erupt in the 1990s. He acted similarly toward Georgia’s Caucasian neighbors. Beria shot the popular Armenian Party leader Aghasi Khanjyan in 1936, attempting to frame his death as a “suicide,” and then installed his deputies Amatuni and Mugdusi who proceeded to unleash

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<sup>32</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 248.

<sup>33</sup> Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 164.



a campaign of mass violence in Armenia. In neighboring Azerbaijan, Beria protégé Bagirov executed tens of thousands of so-called “enemies of the people.” The Purges were at their worst in Georgia itself, under Beria’s direct supervision. In terms of executions and arrests per head of population, Georgia, under Beria, came “in third place nationally behind Moscow oblast’ and the Ukrainian SSR, and even higher if one takes into account the per capita percentage of the overall population affected.”<sup>34</sup>

During the war, it was Beria who proposed the wholesale internal deportation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples to Central Asia, on the flimsy charge that the entire population was complicit in collaboration with the Germans. It was true that a handful of Chechens and Ingush did indeed collaborate with the Nazi invaders, but it was likewise true that the majority of them were either supportive or at least ambivalent toward the Soviet war effort. In fact, the territory of Checheno-Ingushetia “virtually avoided occupation completely.”<sup>35</sup> Such facts mattered little to the sadistic and ruthless Beria, whose “Bolshevism” masked his Georgian chauvinism. Beria himself demonstrated a desire to directly participate in their operation and traveled to Groznyi on February 20, 1944 to oversee the implementation of the deportation personally.<sup>36</sup> In the later aftermath of the operation, mountainous portions of Checheno-Ingushetia would be gifted to Soviet Georgia, as well as Mount Elbrus from the Karachai and Balkars, exiled victims of another vicious deportation devised by Beria.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 238.

<sup>35</sup> Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, trans. Anna Yastrzhembska (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 145. On the deportations, in addition to Polian, see also Chapter 3 of Norman Naimark’s *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*, 146.

<sup>37</sup> Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, 98-99.

Mikoyan recounted how the eviction of “entire nations from their ancestral lands” left a “depressing impression” on him.<sup>38</sup> In the Politburo, he alone dissented on the deportation plan, albeit on the grounds that it would harm the international reputation of the USSR.<sup>39</sup> He detailed his position in his memoirs:

I objected to it. But Stalin explained that these peoples were disloyal to the Soviet regime and that they sympathized with the German fascists. I did not understand how it was possible to blame entire nations for almost treason, because there are party organizations, communists, the mass of peasants, the Soviet intelligentsia! Finally, there were many mobilized into the army, they fought at the front, many representatives of these peoples received the title of Heroes of the Soviet Union! But Stalin was stubborn. And he insisted on the eviction of all these peoples from their places. This was incredible, especially on the part of a man who was famous as the expert authority of the nationality question, a conductor of Leninist nationality policy. This was a departure from the class approach in the resolution of the national question. You cannot blame a whole nation for treason. There were some reactionary elements among the Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians and others who decided to collaborate with the Germans. However, these were only a few cases of individual units that could easily be identified, tracked down, and investigated.<sup>40</sup>

Mikoyan’s objections proved to be costly and ultimately contributed to his demotion within Stalin’s inner circle. Nor did it make a difference to the fate of the Chechen and Ingush people, beyond its symbolic significance. In the end, the entire Chechen and Ingush population was uprooted from their homes and exiled to the distant lands of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The operation, devised by Beria and approved by Stalin, was known as *chechevitsa*, or “lentil” in English, a phonetic play on the word “Chechen” in Russian.<sup>41</sup> To Chechens, it was known as the *aardakh*, or “exodus” (literally “lead out”).<sup>42</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 555.

<sup>39</sup> Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 265.

<sup>40</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 555.

<sup>41</sup> Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, 98.

<sup>42</sup> Valery Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 26.

deportees were crammed into trains and shipped to various parts of Central Asia. Many died along the way from hunger, disease, and cold. Others who lived in remote villages and who could not be easily evacuated were simply murdered outright by Beria's men, in order to finish the job within eight days. The wholesale burning of these villages and the people within them was "their barbaric method of choice."<sup>43</sup> Much of the core territory of the former Checheno-Ingush ASSR became part of a new province stripped entirely of any Chechen-Ingush identity, known simply as the Groznyi Oblast'. The former republic's remaining areas were divided among neighboring Georgia, North Ossetia, and Dagestan.<sup>44</sup>

In the end, over one third of the Chechen and Ingush deportees perished.<sup>45</sup> Beria's NKVD officers were given wartime honors by the Soviet state for their "services." In their native lands, all Vainakh toponyms were changed by Soviet authorities.<sup>46</sup> Officially, Chechno-Ingushetia, like the autonomous entities of the Karachai, Balkars, and Kalmyks had been completely wiped off the map by Stalin and Beria. In their places of destination, the deported peoples were forced to live in restricted "special settlements" and any escape was to be punished by "20 years of penal servitude." Worse, at the end of the war, banishment in exile became defined by the state as "eternal, without the right to return to their native places."<sup>47</sup> The trauma and violence of those years deeply impacted, and arguably continues to impact, the peoples of the North Caucasus to this day.

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<sup>43</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*, 147.

<sup>44</sup> Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, 27.

<sup>46</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*, 161.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-182. For more on the exiled peoples in the Virgin Lands, see Michaela Pohl, "From White Grave to Tselinograd to Astana: The Virgin Lands Opening, Khrushchev's Forgotten First Reform," in *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 269-307. See also Pohl, "The 'planet of one hundred languages': Ethnic relations and Soviet identity in the Virgin Lands," in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (London: Routledge, 2007), 238-261.

## A Meeting with Mikoyan

The circumstances created by the deaths of Stalin and Beria in 1953 presented a new opportunity to redress the deportation of the North Caucasus nationalities. Movement on the issue officially began with the adoption of the order of the Soviet Interior Ministry on July 16, 1954 on the “removal of certain restrictions in the legal status of the special settlers.”<sup>48</sup> The order provided for the “right of freedom of movement to any point of the country on a general basis” and for the cancellation of punishments imposed on special settlers “for violations of the regime in their places of settlement.” It also provided for the deregistration of children of special settlers “of all categories” born after December 31, 1937, and to allow children 16 years or older to attend educational institutions in any part of the country.<sup>49</sup> However, the order was not applicable to certain deported groups, specifically Western Ukrainian nationalists, as well as “bandits” and “kulaks” from the Baltic republics, Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, and Pskov Oblast’, as well as “Andersovtsy” and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Moreover, unauthorized departure (or escape) from the special settlements would still be punished by Soviet law and special settlers were required to register with the Interior Ministry once every year.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> For the full order, see GARF f. 9401, op. 1, d. 1360, ll. 398-400, and A. Artizov, Iu. Sigachev, V. Khlopov and I. Shevchuk, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy, Tom I: Mart 1953 – Fevral’ 1956 gg.* [Rehabilitation: How It Was, Documents of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and Other Materials, Vol. I: March 1953 to February 1956] (Moscow: Demokratsiia and Materik, 2000), 161-162.

<sup>49</sup> Artizov, Sigachev, Khlopov and Shevchuk, *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom I*, 161-162.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 162. “Andersovtsy” refers to the “former servicemen of the Polish Army under the command of [Władysław] Anders, who had arrived on repatriation in the USSR from England in the second half of the 1940s and were relocated in 1951 with their families from Western Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania to special settlements.” (Nikolai Bougai, *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), 167.).

This order was soon followed by a resolution issued by the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU on June 29, 1955 on “measures to strengthen mass political work among the special settlers.”<sup>51</sup> As the resolution noted, it was built on the foundations established by the July 1954 order, which “significantly expanded the civil rights of special settlers” and “created the necessary conditions for the further improvement their material and living conditions, as well as their cultural development, contributing to their engagement in an active social-political life.” The text described the political distrust and discrimination of deported peoples by the local authorities and their exclusion from local political life. It argued that such attitudes “run counter to the Party line and do great harm to the cause for the communist education of the working people.”<sup>52</sup> It also detailed the “unsatisfactory” efforts to carry out political education and cultural work among the deported peoples. To remedy these problems, the Central Committee instructed the local authorities hosting the deported populations to correct all shortcomings and they detailed ways to improve ideological work and education. It called on local officials to “condemn and abandon” the “wrong and harmful” view of these peoples as “second class citizens.”<sup>53</sup>

These legislative acts set the stage for February 1956, when Khrushchev, in his condemnation of Stalin at the CPSU XX Party Congress, signaled a change in policy by strongly denouncing the deportations:

Comrades, let us now turn to some other facts. The Soviet Union is rightfully considered to be a model multiethnic state because we have in practice secured the equality and friendship of all the peoples living in our great motherland. However, the basic Leninist principles of the national policy of the Soviet state were grossly violated by the monstrous acts initiated by Stalin. In this regard, we have in mind

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<sup>51</sup> For the full resolution, see RGANI f. 3, op. 10, d. 151, l. 66, and d. 152, ll. 109-114, as well as Artizov, Sigachev, Khlopov and Shevchuk, *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom I*, 224-227.

<sup>52</sup> Artizov, Sigachev, Khlopov and Shevchuk, *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom I*, 225.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-227.

the mass expulsions of entire nations from their native places, together with Communists and members of the Komsomol, without exception. These expulsions were not dictated by any military considerations.<sup>54</sup>

He continued to specifically single out the liquidation of the homelands of the Karachais, Kalmyks, and Balkars, as well as the Chechens and Ingush, all of whom were “expelled to remote areas,” even as “constant breakthroughs on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War determined the outcome of the war in favor of the Soviet Union.” The jovial Ukrainian-born Khrushchev then jested that “the Ukrainians avoided this fate only because there were too many of them and there was no place to send them. Otherwise, Stalin would have expelled them too.”<sup>55</sup>

Khrushchev’s open condemnation of the deportation was followed by the gradual implementation of resolutions by the Presidium of the Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet on the lifting of special settlement restrictions on the Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, Balkars, Turks, Kurds, and Hemshin Armenians.<sup>56</sup> These moves prompted hope and action from the representatives of other repressed nationalities. On March 17, 1956, only a few weeks after his address at the XX Party Congress, Khrushchev had already received a letter from Ingush writers and intellectuals lauding his speech. The intent was to express the “thoughts, feelings, and hopes of the entire Ingush people” for redress and

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<sup>54</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Doklad na zakrytom zasedanii XX s’ezda KPSS – “O kul’te lichnosti i ego posledstviakh”* [Report of the Closed Meeting of the XX Congress of the CPSU – “On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences”] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959), 40.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> For the resolutions on the Kalmyks (dated March 12, 1956), see RGANI f. 3, op. 14, d. 4, ll. 18 and 56, and Karl Eimermacher, ed. et al. *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti Stalina na XX s’ezde KPSS: Dokumenty* [The Report of N. S. Khrushchev on the Cult of Personality of Stalin at the XX Congress: Documents], (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 266. For the resolutions on the remaining nationalities (dated April 19, 1956), see RGANI f. 3, op. 14, d. 16, ll. 82-85, and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti*, 296-297. For the note on the recommendation of lifting the restrictions on the remaining nationalities by Roman Rudenko, Nikolai Dudorov, Ivan Serov, and P. Kudriavtsev, see RGANI f. 3, op. 12, d. 31, ll. 84-85, and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti*, 278-279.

return to their homeland. After highlighting the Ingush contribution to the October Revolution, the authors of the letter strongly condemned the “slander against the Ingush people” by Beria, and lamented their deportation to Central Asia, for which they also held the “traitor Beria” directly responsible.<sup>57</sup> Yet, despite these “monstrous actions,” the authors maintained that Beria and the former Stalinist authorities were only “temporarily successful” in their intentions. “It is now clear where truth and justice stand,” they wrote.<sup>58</sup> Significantly, although advocating for the return of the Ingush, the authors voiced opposition to displacing those that had moved there since 1944. “We know, just as our nation knows,” they wrote, “that now people live on our lands and that it would be unjust to bring ruin to them and drive them out of the places where they have settled. But we also realize, as does our entire nation, that there will be enough space in our native land for both our people and those who now live there.” As a resolution, they advocated allowing the settlers to retain the properties that they held. “Our people will not quarrel over homes and property,” they authors pledged. “Let all that remain with those who now own them. We will build new homes, better than those that we had. Through honest work, we will acquire everything that a Soviet person needs for a prosperous and cultural life.”<sup>59</sup>

As deliberations continued behind the scenes, Chechen and Ingush leaders appealed to Mikoyan. Party member and former Raikom Party Secretary Sultan Nalaev and doctor Sultan Khamiev jointly penned a letter to the Soviet Armenian statesman, which they sent

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<sup>57</sup> For the full letter, see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 12-21. An abridged version can be found in Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 267-270. The abridged version omits a significant portion of the text, including discussion of the history of the Ingush people and the role of the Ingush in the October Revolution.

<sup>58</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 269.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

to him on March 30.<sup>60</sup> “The expulsion of the Chechens and the Ingush was accompanied by monstrous terror, humiliation, and looting,” they wrote. “These are just a few of the dark acts and antagonistic deeds of the fascist-plunderer bands of Beria and his accomplices. The atrocities of these sworn, despicable bandits of Beria and his associates Kabulov, Tsereteli, and others, will remain in memory for many years.”<sup>61</sup> After highlighting the patriotic service of the Chechens and Ingush on the Soviet side in the Great Patriotic War, Nalaev and Khamiev directly appealed to Mikoyan for the restoration of their autonomous republic:

For a long time, moral oppression and mockery have caused immense damage to the collective psyche of our people. Therefore, colossal propaganda and organizational work is needed among the Chechens and Ingush to eliminate this moral trauma once and for all, and such effective work can only be accomplished by the restoration of the Checheno-Ingush republic.

At the present time, having destroyed Beria’s gang and the theory of the cult of personality, the Communist Party and the Soviet government have created the conditions for the further strengthening of the friendship of peoples of the USSR. It seems that it is the right time to ask the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government to restore our legitimate Checheno-Ingush Republic on its former territory.<sup>62</sup>

Nalaev and Khamiev expressed hope that their request would be soon satisfied by the Soviet leadership. “People dream of the places where their grandfathers and great-grandfathers were born, raised, and worked,” they wrote. “The restoration of the Checheno-Ingush Republic is the cherished dream of the Chechens and the Ingush. The restoration of the republic will open broad possibilities for the Chechens and Ingush for intensive

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<sup>60</sup> For the full letter, see RGANI f. 4, op. 16, d. 74, ll. 150-155, Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 77-80, and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 348-351.

<sup>61</sup> Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 77.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.



progress in the economy, culture and politics and to finally eliminate the moral trauma that Beria and his conspiratorial group inflicted on them.”<sup>63</sup>

Nalaev and Khamiev also took the opportunity to praise Khrushchev’s condemnation of the deportations and of the abolition of Checheno-Ingushetia. “The Checheno-Ingush people were waiting for the truth and finally they waited until it came,” they said. “Recently, in institutions and enterprises, we acquainted ourselves with the letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Then, when we heard the truthful words of Comrade Khrushchev, feeling fraternal sympathy in those words, we, the Chechens and Ingush, filled with joy, could not control ourselves at that moment. Tears of happiness and joy flowed from us.” They concluded by expressing confidence that the Chechen and Ingush peoples “would return to their homeland in the near future and stand under the common Leninist banner of the multinational peoples of the USSR and go forth toward the shining heights of communism.”<sup>64</sup>

Internally, the letters to Khrushchev and Mikoyan prompted an immediate reaction from the state. On April 9, 1956, Head of the Department of Party Bodies Evgeny Gromov, Head of the Department of Science and Higher Education Vladimir Kirillin, and Head of the Department of Culture Dmitri Polikarpov issued a letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU on the Ingush appeal to Khrushchev.<sup>65</sup> It underscored the work that was accomplished in the educational and cultural spheres of the deported peoples since the July 1954 order and the June 1955 resolution. These included the publication of newspapers

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>65</sup> For the full letter, see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 38-39, Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 80-82, and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 292-294.

and political literature in Chechen and Ingush. Moreover, Gromov, Kirillin, and Polikarpov recommended the formation of Chechen and Ingush dance ensembles and the publication of works of Chechen and Ingush national literature in their native tongues.

However, despite the March 17 letter and Khrushchev's strong words at the XX Party Congress, the authors noted opposition from state officials on the lifting of restrictions on the Chechen and Ingush deportees to return to their former place of residence.<sup>66</sup> "With regard to lifting the restrictions on the Ingush and the Chechens," the authors wrote, "Prosecutor General Comrade Rudenko, Chairman of the KGB Comrade Serov, Minister of Internal Affairs Comrade Dudorov, and Minister of Justice Comrade Gorshenin consider it best to temporarily refrain from making a decision on this matter." They noted that their position was informed by the "improper behavior of some part of the Ingush and the Chechens in their places of settlement, including the disruption of public order on their part, up to factual manifestation of banditry." They stressed that it "must be kept in mind that in all cases of lifting restrictions on citizens of other nationalities, evicted by the respective decisions, it was specifically indicated that they have no right to return to their former place of residence." Therefore, they concluded, "it would be inappropriate to make an exception for the Ingush and Chechens in this respect."<sup>67</sup>

However, this position began to change already in the following month. On May 17, Gromov and Valentin Zolotukhin, Deputy Head of the Department of Administrative Bodies of the Central Committee, issued a note to the CPSU Central Committee on the deported nationalities.<sup>68</sup> The authors wrote that the Departments of Party and

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<sup>66</sup> Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 81.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> For Gromov and Zolotukhin's full note, see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 41-42, and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 307-308.

Administrative Bodies of the Central Committee received “121 letters, which were signed by 6565 citizens” of Chechen, Ingush, Karachai, Balkar, and Crimean Tatar background. “These letters contain requests for the return of the evicted citizens to their former places of residence,” they wrote, “and the restoration of their formerly existing autonomous republics and oblasts.”<sup>69</sup> Gromov and Zolotukhin further noted that “as of now, restrictions on special settlement have been lifted for the Kalmyks, Balkars, and Crimean Tatars, and a process is underway to lift restrictions for the Karachais as well.” Consequently, they wrote that restrictions remained in place for only for the Ingush and the Chechens. “We would consider it appropriate to charge a commission consisting of Comrades Rudenko, Serov, Dudorov, Gorshenin and Zolotukhin with considering this issue,” they maintained, “keeping in mind the possibility of lifting the restrictions on these nationalities.”<sup>70</sup> As for as the restoration of the autonomous republics, they recommended consulting the Central Committee of the Communist Parties of the Union republics, “taking into account that, if the question arose of restoring one or more autonomous oblasts, then this should be done within the [respective] union republics.”<sup>71</sup>

Then, in May, one of the signatories of the March 17 letter to Khrushchev, Ingush writer Idris Bazorkin, joined with Chechen linguist Iunus Desheriev to organize a delegation of representatives of all the deported peoples to meet with high officials in Moscow. Unfortunately, they were unable to find representatives from every deported nationality, despite the best efforts of Desheriev. “The idea of organizing a delegation comprised of representatives of all repressed peoples was not successful,” he recalled. “In

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<sup>69</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 307.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

Moscow, I turned to one Balkar. He categorically objected to the organization of such a delegation and told me that ‘this is none of our business.’ One Crimean Tatar essentially said the same thing.” Desheriev wrote that they feared “new repressions.” He also recounted meeting with the retired Kalmyk Colonel-General Oka Gorodovikov who “regularly relaxed at the Gogol monument, on Arbat Square.” When Desheriev offered Gorodovikov the position of the leader of the delegation to the Kremlin, he cautiously declined “due to poor health.”<sup>72</sup> Therefore, Desheriev, Bazorkin, and others decided to express their grievances as an exclusively Vainakh (i.e., Chechen and Ingush) delegation.<sup>73</sup>

Alongside Bazorkin, Desheriev worked to carefully select the members of the group, paying particular attention to the “social composition of the delegation, as well as to the coverage of all the major areas of their settlement.” The final delegation consisted of 13 people and was “careful not to advertise everything that [they] sought to achieve.”<sup>74</sup> One month later, on June 9, 1956, the Chechen-Ingush delegation arrived at Spasskii Gate to meet with Mikoyan at the Kremlin and request the restoration their autonomous republics.<sup>75</sup> They originally sought an audience with Khrushchev, but the First Secretary was busy attending to the visit of Yugoslavia’s Josip Broz Tito – his first trip to the USSR since the Tito-Stalin split.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, it was left to Mikoyan to meet with the group.

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<sup>72</sup> Iunus Desheriev, *Zhizn' vo mgle i borbe: O tragedii repressirovannykh narodov, Tom I* [Life in Darkness and Struggle: On the Tragedy of the Repressed Peoples, Volume I] (Moscow: Paleia, 1995), 236.

<sup>73</sup> Dukuvakha Abdurakhmanov, Magomed Muzaev, Abdullah Bugaev, V. Shepelev, and Abbas Osmaev, eds. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962): Sbornik dokumentov i materialov, Tom I* [Restoration of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR: Collection of Documents and Materials, Vol. I] (Nalchik: Pechatny dvor, 2013), 4.

<sup>74</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 236.

<sup>75</sup> The delegation consisted of Iunus Desheriev, Idris Bazorkin, Abbas Gaisumov, Zhanetta Ziazikova, Aki Mataev, Hadzhibikar Mutaliev, Akhmet Saidov, Alaudin Taysumov, Osman Tashtujev, Khadzhibikar Khamatkhanov, Sultan Khamiev, Magomed Shataev, and Dzhabrail Elmurziev.

<sup>76</sup> Iakub Patiev, ed. *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia, 1944–2004, Dokumenty, materialy, kommentarii* [The Ingush: Deportation, Return, Rehabilitation, 1944–2004, Documents, Materials, Commentary] (Magas: Serdalo, 2004), 397.

After a thorough inspection by the guard, the delegation arrived at the Soviet House of Government at 3:20 PM but faced a two-hour delay.<sup>77</sup> At 5 PM, they greeted Mikoyan in the reception room. After shaking hands with the delegates, Mikoyan gestured for them to sit at a large table. Mullah Abbas Gaisumov spoke first and began to outline the goals of the delegation and expressed its gratitude for the political rehabilitation of their peoples, with Desheriev acting as interpreter. Sitting at the head of the table, Mikoyan listened to them carefully as his secretary, Romanenko, took notes at a nearby desk. After his guests had finished, Mikoyan immediately told them that “Stalin was at fault for the tragedy [of the Chechen and Ingush peoples] and that there was no need to thank the party, as the party was obliged to correct its mistakes.”<sup>78</sup>

Gaisumov then gave the floor to Bazorkin who read the letter of the delegation to Mikoyan. “I was nervous in certain places and stopped three times for several seconds, but no one interrupted me or interfered,” Bazorkin recounted. He added that he “finished firmly and confidently read the document, which could have been better or worse, but spoke firmly enough to the representative of the authorities that we are alive, that we want to live, and that, sooner or later, we will live like everyone else.”<sup>79</sup> Then Desheriev spoke, outlining the essence of the delegation’s demands to the Soviet government, which consisted of “a condemnation of repression against the deported peoples, their return to their original homelands, and the restoration of their national autonomous entities.”<sup>80</sup> After the speech, he presented Mikoyan with a letter and an appeal from the delegation to be given to Khrushchev. Taking the two documents, Mikoyan told Desheriev and the others,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 399-400.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>80</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 239.

“you did well to present all your proposals in detail. I will hand them over to Comrade Khrushchev and, of course, I will support you.”<sup>81</sup>

According to Desheriev, Mikoyan inquired about the fate of Idris Ziazikov, the first leader of the short-lived Ingush Autonomous Oblast’ and a victim of Stalinism.<sup>82</sup> “His widow Zhanetta is with us,” responded Desheriev. Zhanetta came forward and “spoke about the tragic fate of her late husband.”<sup>83</sup> She was followed by Magomed Shataev and Dzhabrail Elmurziev. Zhanetta acted as an interpreter for the latter who “expressed resentment for everything that had been done to us and hope that all would be corrected, asking the question: ‘What should we say to the people?’”<sup>84</sup> She asked the same question to Mikoyan in her own remarks. At that moment, Mikoyan’s phone suddenly rang. He picked it up and told the caller that he could not be bothered. “I am accepting the Chechen-Ingush delegation now.”<sup>85</sup> Gaisumov leaned over to Desheriev and quietly told him in Chechen, “So now we have become the Chechen-Ingush delegation!” “Before that,” recalled Desheriev, “we never dared to call ourselves the ‘Chechen-Ingush delegation.’ We could be asked: who directed you, who authorized you? This was entirely our own initiative, which was subsequently, ardently, and gratefully supported not only by the Chechen and Ingush peoples, but also by the Balkar, Kalmyk, and Karachai peoples.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> The Ingush Autonomous Oblast’ existed from 1922 to 1934, when the Soviet government merged it with the Chechen Autonomous Oblast’ to form the Checheno-Ingush Autonomous Oblast’. In 1936, the Oblast’ was elevated to the status of an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). For further information, see: Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, 83 and 91-93.

<sup>83</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 239.

<sup>84</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 400.

<sup>85</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 239.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

The meeting with Mikoyan lasted one hour.<sup>87</sup> However, throughout the meeting, Mikoyan, although sympathetic to his guests, maintained his composure and was careful not to express his own sentiments overtly. He was already well-aware of the efforts by the Soviet government being made behind-the-scenes to remedy the issue. In a letter to his daughter Aze from 23 June, only a few weeks after the meeting, Bazorkin recounted that Mikoyan “sat almost motionless” and “listened calmly, but not indifferently. He showed none of his affection for us, nor did he show any unfriendliness. There was neither one, nor the other.”<sup>88</sup> The Ingush author added that Mikoyan was “dry, but not impolite” with “not a single smile” and “not a drop of warmth.” In fact, he recalled that he “did not utter a single human word,” nor did he “allow himself to speak to a people who had to endure and suffer so much over the years.” Overall, Bazorkin felt that Mikoyan’s cautious diplomatic demeanor was intended “not to leave us any impression of his personal attitude on this issue.”<sup>89</sup> By contrast, Desheriev, who recorded his memories of the meeting decades later, recalled that Mikoyan greeted the visiting delegation “warmly.”<sup>90</sup>

At the conclusion of the meeting at 6 PM, Mikoyan called the director of the Kremlin Armory Chamber and “urged and asked him to retain the chamber staff in order to enable the Chechen-Ingush delegation to visit the Armory.” The delegation was “moved by such attention,” given the uncertainty about their potential return and the lingering sense of stigma felt among deported nationalities.<sup>91</sup> However, they left the meeting with mixed sentiments. Desheriev felt confident that the meeting had firmly secured the restoration of

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<sup>87</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 400.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 400-401.

<sup>90</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 238.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 239. Tishkov notes that this stigma was “common among many deported or otherwise victimized peoples.” (Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*, 25-26.)

the Checheno-Ingush ASSR. However, Bazorkin was less certain about Mikoyan's ability to influence the final decision on the matter. In a letter to his daughter, he wrote:

I don't know how it will all end. I have no confidence in anything, but I do know one thing: that this man [Mikoyan]... will now at least say to himself, 'But still, the Ingush and the Chechens live, they have pride, they have patriotism, they are small, but not so small, they have people.' And that's enough. If the outcome is not destined to be good, then at least we will let them know that we are not complete fools and we understand everything.<sup>92</sup>

Once the delegation reached the Armory, Desheriev, who had already visited the museum, left the group to organize a dinner reception to assess the outcome of the meeting. Meanwhile, a member of the Armory staff took the rest of the group on a tour of the chamber for two hours.<sup>93</sup> Afterwards, Desheriev invited the group to conclude the day, perhaps fittingly, at the legendary Armenian restaurant "Ararat" in Moscow to discuss the meeting. The dinner commenced with a prayer led by Gaisumov and Ingush Mullah Aki Mataev.<sup>94</sup> The mood was reflective. "It seemed to us that we did not make any outstanding missteps in this enterprise," Bazorkin recalled. "We agreed right then and there – to tell the people only what we heard from Mikoyan. For this, we decided to record all circumstances and answers fresh from our memories."<sup>95</sup>

Meanwhile, Desheriev concluded the meeting to be a success. In his memoirs, written many years later, he recalled:

These days will forever remain in the memory of the members of the first Chechen-Ingush delegation. It was essentially the first delegation of repressed peoples in our memory, in the memory of the people. Repressed peoples applauded our reception in the Kremlin. After several telephone calls by members of the delegation from Moscow to their places of residence in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, word spread

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<sup>92</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia*, 401.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 240.

<sup>95</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia*, 401-402.



about the meeting of the delegation of repressed peoples in the Kremlin, as well as the attention paid to it. Even the members of the delegation who did not have time to return, already joyfully greeted one another, organized meetings and rallies, expressing their gratitude to Khrushchev, Mikoyan, the Soviet government, the XX Party Congress of the CPSU for exposing the cult of personality and condemning repressions. Members of the delegation who returned from Moscow were solemnly greeted. The 'appeal' to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the Central Committee of the CPSU, and the Council of Ministers was propagated and distributed throughout almost all the places of residence of the representatives of the repressed peoples.<sup>96</sup>

Desheriev subsequently met with representatives of other deported peoples to tell them about the outcome of the Kremlin reception days after the meeting. At Arbat Square, he met again with Colonel-General Gorodovikov who "became immediately interested" in the results of the meeting and inquired about who received the representatives. "I told him about the reception of our delegation by Mikoyan," recalled Desheriev. "I also told him about the materials that we delivered to Mikoyan and about Mikoyan's promise to support us." He met again with Gorodovikov and encouraged him to organize a Kalmyk delegation to arrange an official Kremlin meeting, with the same mission. "Gorodovikov was thrilled," he recalled. "He thanked me for the information and stood up and told me 'I will go now and see what I can do. So long.' A few days later, the Kalmyk delegation arrived in Moscow. Then a Balkar delegation, then a Karachai one."<sup>97</sup> Not only was the news of the successful meeting received well by other repressed peoples, but also by other Soviet nationalities as well. "All the peoples of the Soviet Union overwhelmingly approved and welcomed the condemnation of the brutal and historically unprecedented repressions against entire nations," Desheriev wrote. "My business trips to Central Asia, the Caucasus,

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<sup>96</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 240-241.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Moldova convinced me that this was the case. Such was the time of the so-called ‘Khrushchev Thaw.’”<sup>98</sup>

In terms of the deported nationalities, the Karachai already appealed to Mikoyan directly even before their in-person meeting. On May 21, a large group of over a thousand exiled Karachai sent a letter to Mikoyan, requesting the restoration of their homeland and their hope for a swift return.<sup>99</sup> After briefly enumerating the benefits of Soviet power for their national group, the Karachai representatives also raised the issue of their ill-treatment at the hands of Beria. “All these successes and achievements of the Karachai people,” the authors wrote, “were eliminated by the hostile activities of the despicable gang of Beria and other enemies. As a result, we were subjected to political, economic, and national humiliation. We were considered criminals only because we are Karachai by nationality. This created a situation in which one would assume a Karachai to be a bandit and so on. All of this artificially incited ethnic strife.”<sup>100</sup>

However, the signatories to the letter “waited confidently that our Communist Party would give weighty words to this unheard-of eviction of an entire nation indiscriminately under the conditions of Soviet power.” As with the Chechens and the Ingush, the Karachai were also “looking forward to the XX Party Congress” and were not disappointed by its results. Khrushchev’s condemnation of the deportations and the abolition of autonomous republics elicited “boundless joy and enthusiasm” from the Karachai who expressed “gratitude to the Presidium of the Central Committee and our entire party.”<sup>101</sup> The

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>99</sup> For the full letter to Mikoyan, see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 72-73 and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 323-324.

<sup>100</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 323.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 324.

signatories were confident of an imminent resolution to the issue, expressing the hope for the restoration of their homeland in the North Caucasus, “thereby rehabilitating our nation as an equal member of the family of the peoples of the USSR.” Referring to Mikoyan’s tenure as the First Secretary of the North Caucasus during NEP, they added “Dear Anastas Ivanovich! Many of us know you personally, and we all know you as the former secretary of our regional party committee. We appeal to you, as a member of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee who knows us, so that you objectively and justly contribute to the solution of our request, i.e. to return us to the North Caucasus.”<sup>102</sup>

Such appeals would have a cumulative impact on the Soviet leadership to act. Indeed, the May 21 letter was not to be the last appeal that Mikoyan received from the Karachai. Only a few days later, on May 28, a group of Karachai communists sent another letter, addressed not only to Mikoyan, but also to Voroshilov, Malenkov, Brezhnev, and Belaev.<sup>103</sup> This letter and another appeal from a group of Kalmyk deportees were both reviewed by members of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee on June 21. The resulting resolution led to the establishment of a Commission of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee under the chairmanship of Mikoyan, with the task of studying the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples.<sup>104</sup> “After the death of Stalin,” Mikoyan recounted in his memoirs, “we organized a commission under my chairmanship on the return of

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<sup>102</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti*, 324.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 322n1.

<sup>104</sup> RGANI f. 3, op. 12, d. 68, ll. 20-24 and A. Artizov, Iu. Sigachev, I. Shevchuk, and V. Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Dokumenty Prezidiuma TSK KPSS i drugie materialy, Tom II: Fevral 1956 - nachalo 80-kh godov* [Rehabilitation: How It Was, Documents of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and Other Materials, Vol. II: February 1956 to the Beginning of the 1980s] (Moscow: Demokratiia and Materik, 2003), 805n7.

unreasonably evicted nationalities to their homelands, to their native lands, to restore their statehood.”<sup>105</sup> It would become informally known as the “Mikoyan commission.”<sup>106</sup>

## **The Mikoyan Commission**

The Mikoyan commission intensified efforts to remedy the plight of most of the deported nationalities in the wake of the meetings and appeals. The task was well suited for Mikoyan, especially given his experience in the North Caucasus and his role in determining the original boundaries of the autonomous republics from the Gorskaia ASSR during the NEP era. On July 5-6, the Presidium of the Central Committee met again in Moscow to discuss the report of the commission on the appeals of the deported peoples to return to their homelands and to restore their autonomous republics. In the end, it resolved (a) that the Mikoyan commission continue its work and “prepare specific proposals” on the matter, and (b) to “remove the Chechens, Ingush and Karachai from the special settlement restrictions on the same grounds as the lifting of restrictions on the Germans, Kalmyks, Balkars and Crimean Tatars.”<sup>107</sup>

However, as the work of the commission proceeded, it soon became apparent that the potential return of the Chechens, Ingush, and Karachai was highly contested within the Soviet government. In particular, the security forces opposed the return of these peoples to their indigenous lands. One week after the July 5-6 Presidium meeting, the CPSU Central Committee Secretariat solicited recommendations from Gromov, Shikin, Churaev, Zolotukhin, Rudenko, Serov, and Dudorov on the appeals of the Chechen, Ingush, Balkar,

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<sup>105</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 556.

<sup>106</sup> Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 4, and Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 10.

<sup>107</sup> Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 805-806n7.

Karachai, Kalmyk, and German deportees. It included the March letter from Nalaev and Khamiev to Mikoyan as a reference.<sup>108</sup> However, their recommendations were apparently much more conservative than Mikoyan and others had hoped. A resulting decree, issued on the following Monday (July 16) by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and signed by Pegov and Voroshilov, lifted the special settlement restrictions on the Chechens, Ingush, and Karachai. However, it still prohibited these deportees from formally returning to their former places of residence.<sup>109</sup>

The July 16 decree effectively met the deportees “halfway” by removing restrictions but stopping short of the restoration of the autonomous republics and return to the former places of residence. This “compromise” decision originated from internal disagreements on the matter, with Mikoyan favoring the return of the deportees, but encountering resistance from Ivan Serov and other security officials. The reasons for their opposition remain unclear, although available evidence indicates that they primarily feared potential destabilization in the North Caucasus, which they claimed would have resulted from the “improper behavior” on the part of “some” Chechen and Ingush returnees.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, many security officials played key roles in the wartime deportations, most notably Serov, who served as Beria’s deputy. Mikoyan even went so far as to propose to Khrushchev the idea of revoking the awards that Serov had bestowed upon those officers and military personnel who participated in the deportation during the war. They were subsequently stripped of their honors.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> RGANI f. 4, op. 15, d. 17, l. 45, Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 76, and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti*, 348.

<sup>109</sup> Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 88-89, and Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 162-163.

<sup>110</sup> Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 81.

<sup>111</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 556.

Predictably, the decision proved too little for the deportees who continued to challenge their restrictions from below. A flurry of additional letters from Chechen, Ingush, Karachai, and Kalmyk deportees requesting return to their original place of residence and the restoration of their autonomous republics prompted further action from the government. A September 7 report by officials tasked with reviewing the letters to the CPSU Central Committee's Mikhail Pervukhin revealed efforts by deportees to return to the former residences anyway, regardless of official decree. Arriving from Kyrgyzstan, these unofficial returnees encountered open hostility from local officials in the Dagestan ASSR and the Groznyi Oblast'.<sup>112</sup> Conversely, letters were also sent to Soviet high officials from Avars, Russians, and Dagestanis complaining about the unauthorized return of the Chechens and Ingush. The authors of the report to Pervukhin noted that, according to Dagestan ASSR and Groznyi Oblast' officials, 600-700 Chechen and Ingush families (2500 people) arrived in Dagestan, while 30-40 families arrived in the Groznyi Oblast'.<sup>113</sup> The strong opposition to their return from different national communities anticipated the future territorial and property disputes and conflicts to come.

In response to the unofficial return of Chechens and Ingush and the growing tension with neighboring national groups, Pervukhin called for a discussion on the issue at the Presidium of the Central Committee in a September 8 resolution. "I consider it necessary to discuss the questions raised in these letters at the Presidium," he said.<sup>114</sup> The situation was serious, and it quickly became apparent that the July decree was not enough to resolve

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<sup>112</sup> The greatest number of letters were received by the government from Chechen and Ingush deportees. For the report to Pervukhin by the employees of the Council of Ministers tasked with handling the letters, see APRF f. 3, op. 58, d. 183, ll. 109-114 and Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 176-180.

<sup>113</sup> Artizov, Sigachev, Shevchuk, and Khlopov, eds. *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo, Tom II*, 179-180.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 176n.

this issue, which threatened to destabilize the North Caucasus. Therefore, the Central Committee decided to change tack and instead began to explore the possibility of restoring the autonomous republics of the deported peoples and allowing them to return to their former places of residence. On September 15, exactly one week after Pervukhin's resolution, Evgeny Gromov, sent a report to the Mikoyan commission on the feasibility of returning the deportees and restoring their republics. The report was based on the findings of a group of employees of the Central Committee apparatus, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>115</sup> Overall, the study concluded that return and restoration was indeed feasible, noting the underdevelopment and underpopulated status of the former homelands of the deportees. However, Gromov noted that "Party and Soviet bodies, as well as many residents in the Groznyi Oblast', the Dagestan ASSR, and the North Ossetian ASSR, strongly object to the return of the Chechens and Ingush." Gromov also added that, although Soviet Kyrgyzstan was open to allowing the deportees to return to their native lands, other republics with deportees (such as Kazakhstan) were reluctant to let them go "due to the lack of labor force."<sup>116</sup> Proposals by the Central Committee representatives to establish Chechen and Ingush autonomous units within Soviet Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan reportedly received an "extremely negative" reaction from Chechen and Ingush representatives.<sup>117</sup>

Deliberations continued until finally, on October 16, 1956, colleagues of the all-Union Supreme Soviet Aristov, Gorkin, Pigalev, Ponomarev, and Fomenko presented a draft resolution to Mikoyan on "the restoration of the national autonomy of the Kalmyks,

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<sup>115</sup> For Gromov's full report, see RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 112-113, and Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 387-389. The exact names of the employees are not known.

<sup>116</sup> Eimermacher, *Doklad N. S. Khrushcheva o kul'te lichnosti*, 388-389.

<sup>117</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 416.

Karachai, Balkars, Chechens, and Ingush.”<sup>118</sup> This draft strongly condemned the deportations as a “gross violation” of the Soviet national policy and “one of the manifestations of the cult of personality alien to Marxism-Leninism.”<sup>119</sup> Even more significantly, the draft underscored that early Soviet rehabilitation measures for the deportees “cannot be considered sufficient.” “These measures,” the authors stressed, “do not resolve the issue of the complete rehabilitation of unreasonably evicted peoples, as well as restoration of their equality among other nations. It also does not resolve the lack of conditions for the development of these peoples and for the return and restoration of their autonomous entities.” With that, the draft resolution proclaimed the decision of the CPSU Central Committee and the Council of Ministers to restore the autonomous units of the Kalmyks, Karachai, Balkars, Chechens, and Ingush “within the next 3-4 years.” Regarding the Chechens and Ingush, the resolution noted the presence of the new populations on their native territory that arrived since 1944. It called for the formation of a government commission, including Soviet state and Party officials as well as Chechen and Ingush representatives, to determine the boundaries of the restored Checheno-Ingush ASSR.<sup>120</sup>

The draft formed the basis for the official resolution on the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples adopted by the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee on November 24, 1956.<sup>121</sup> In addition to the creation of the commission to determine the boundaries, the resolution called for the organized return of all those deported, and for the active participation of representatives of the repressed nationalities to assist with the restoration

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<sup>118</sup> For the full resolution, see GARF f. 7523, op. 107, d. 234. ll. 2-7, and Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia*, 408-409.

<sup>119</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia*, 408.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>121</sup> For the full text of the resolution, see RGANI f. 3, op. 12, d. 145, ll. 109-115, Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 101-105, and Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia*, 410-415.



of the autonomous republics. These representatives were organized by the Soviet government into “Organizing Committees” (*Orkomitety*).<sup>122</sup> “For the period of the restoration of the republic,” recalled committee member Dziiiautdin Malsagov, “the Orgkom was to assume the functions of the government and the Supreme Soviet [of the autonomous republic]. The chairman was Muslim Gairbekovich Gairbekov, and they appointed me to be his deputy. Abdul-Hamid Tangiev was also included in the Orgkom in order to nominate the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic in the future.”<sup>123</sup>

However, not all deported nations were given the opportunity to be rehabilitated. “Exceptions were made for the Crimean Tatars and the Volga Germans,” Mikoyan recalled.<sup>124</sup> Although the civil rights of these groups and the restrictions on their movements were restored by the Soviet authorities, they were “not granted a legally formulated right of return to their homelands.”<sup>125</sup> In its official explanation, the government noted that both peoples already had “homelands” outside of the Crimean and Volga regions – Tatarstan in the case of the Crimean Tatars, and Germany in the case of the Volga Germans, with the latter already having a scattered presence throughout the USSR. The November 1956 resolution stated that “it is inappropriate to grant national autonomy to the Tatars who previously lived in Crimea, given that the former Crimean ASSR was not an autonomous republic for the Tatars alone, but rather a multinational republic in which the Tatars made up less than one fifth of the total population.” The resolution maintained that “within the Russian SFSR, a Tatar autonomous entity already exists – the Tatar ASSR” and that the “territory of Crimea is presently a populated oblast’

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<sup>122</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 248-249.

<sup>123</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, reabilitatsiia*, 405.

<sup>124</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 556.

<sup>125</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*, 201.

of the Ukrainian SSR.” Consequently, the resolution emphasized that the Crimean Tatars had the full right to freely settle in the Tatar ASSR and that the Council of Ministers of the Tatar ASSR and the Tatar Obkom of the CPSU would “provide the necessary assistance for the economic and work arrangements of the Tatar population, which will arrive for permanent residence in the republic.”<sup>126</sup> However, the efforts by the authorities to accommodate the Crimean Tatars did not stop their determination to return to the Crimean peninsula for the entire duration of the Soviet era.<sup>127</sup>

According to Mikoyan, Khrushchev believed that both groups adapted well to their new locations. In the case of the Tatars, Mikoyan wrote that Khrushchev felt that had “settled down well in the new areas” of Central Asia and that he “did not see any reason to resettle them again, especially since Crimea became part of Ukraine.”<sup>128</sup> Similarly, Mikoyan wrote that Khrushchev believed that the Volga Germans were “well accustomed to the Virgin Lands of Kazakhstan and worked well there.” He therefore concluded that “there was little point in resettling them, except to return them to where their ancestors lived.” As Mikoyan noted, the Presidium of the Central Committee agreed with this decision. “So, much was corrected after Stalin’s death, but not everything was possible to fix,” he recalled, in a statement that implied a certain sympathy on his part toward these groups.<sup>129</sup> Historians have sought additional explanations for the reasons behind Moscow’s reluctance to allow for the return of these groups. In his study of the Volga Germans, Fred Koch argued that the Soviet government needed the Volga Germans to

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<sup>126</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 414.

<sup>127</sup> As Polian wrote, “it is noteworthy that Crimean Tatars were persistent in fighting for their rights during the entire period of their exile and under any circumstances. Their preparedness to move to their homeland immediately and under any conditions was almost unanimous” (Polian, *Against Their Will*, 214).

<sup>128</sup> Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, 556.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

assist in developing those areas east of Urals. After all, he reasoned, “their forefathers had opened frontierlands on the Volga and in south Russia too.”<sup>130</sup> In his writings on the Crimean Tatars, Edward Allworth suggested the possibility that “ideological bias” against small nationalities in Marxists texts contributed to Khrushchev’s decision. However, Moscow’s decision to allow for the return of most of the other deported peoples, including numerically smaller groups like the Balkars, belies this argument.<sup>131</sup>

Scholar Pavel Polian has argued that the use of state resources to resettle these groups to their original lands of settlement did not seem feasible to Soviet authorities and they were “extremely wary of any disturbances to the status quo that may have developed with the absence of these peoples.”<sup>132</sup> In other words, the Soviet government not only feared the potential cost of returning these people, but also potential conflict between the returnees and the settled population. This explanation certainly forms part of the story but given that voices within the Soviet leadership shared similar concerns about the return of other deported peoples, such the Chechens and the Ingush, other factors undoubtedly contributed to it. These factors would have included (in the case of the Crimean Tatars) the 1954 incorporation of Crimea into Soviet Ukraine, or, more significantly, political conflict within the Soviet leadership over the return of these peoples.

Mikoyan alluded to the Polian explanation when he received a delegation of Volga Germans on June 7, 1965. Much like the Chechens and Ingush ten years earlier, the delegation arrived in Moscow and met with Mikoyan and Deputy Premier Aleksandr

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<sup>130</sup> Fred C. Koch, *The Volga Germans in Russia and the Americas from 1763 to the Present* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 301.

<sup>131</sup> Edward A. Allworth, “Mass Exile, Ethnocide, Group Derogation: Anomaly or Norm in Soviet Nationality Policies?,” in *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*, ed. Edward A. Allworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 203.

<sup>132</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*, 201.

Shelepin in the hope that the Soviet government would restore their autonomous republic and allow them to return to their former homeland.<sup>133</sup> Mikoyan listened carefully to their demands and responded to them:

You raise the question of reestablishing the republic. We understand very well that that would be the best solution to the problem. But that is impossible, because we would have to take half a million people [from the Volga area] and resettle them. There is no reason to think that the Germans cannot live without a republic. After all, before the war, two—thirds of the Germans lived outside the boundaries of the republic. At this time, we cannot reestablish the republic. That would involve great difficulties. Not everything that has been done in history is correctable. No one confuses you with the West Germans. You are Soviet citizens and have the right to newspapers, schools, and so on. In the present situation, we cannot move toward reestablishing the republic, because that would entail enormous economic losses. But as far as cultural needs are concerned, we can meet you halfway.<sup>134</sup>

Mikoyan's response is noteworthy, at once expressing his personal support for the restoration for the Volga German republic, while also saying that it was not feasible. Although sympathetic and apologetic, he was effectively admitting that he alone could not influence the outcome, but nevertheless attempted to assuage the concerns of his guests by proposing to meet them "halfway."<sup>135</sup> His frank response also alludes to the possibility that the outcomes for the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans were the result of internal political struggles, akin to those over the return of the Chechens and Ingush. Polian has alluded to this possibility, noting the reluctance on the part of the security services to allow for the return of these peoples. For instance, upon learning that the Volga Germans were scattered throughout the USSR and "numbered 60–80 thousand only in 9 regions," Soviet

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<sup>133</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, ed. *An End to Silence: Uncensored Opinion in the Soviet Union*, trans. George Saunders (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 240.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>135</sup> According to Krista Goff, the Crimean Tatars organized a similar delegation to visit Mikoyan in the late 1950s and received a similar response from him (Krista A. Goff, *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 278).

Interior Minister Nikolai Dudorov concluded that the restoration of their autonomous republic was “pointless.”<sup>136</sup> Polian also wrote that in 1956, Dudorov “found it most logical to create an autonomous republic for Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan” because its climatic conditions were “approximate the conditions in their previous place of residence.”<sup>137</sup>

The reconstitution of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR entailed the return of territories that the Soviet government either had made part of the Groznyi Oblast’, or had transferred to neighboring Georgia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia. However, in January 1992, Malsagov claimed that an initial plan for the boundaries of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR, devised by Central Committee Department Head Viktor Churaev, envisioned Dagestan, Georgia, and North Ossetia retaining the territories that the Soviet government had ceded to them in 1944. According to Malsagov, this initial plan was predictably “sharply opposed” by the Checheno-Ingush Orgkom. “Anastas Ivanovich,” Malsagov asked Mikoyan, “how are you going to restore our republic by allowing Dagestan to keep five raions, Georgia to keep three, and Ossetia to keep one?” Mikoyan indicated that parts of the Groznyi Oblast’ that were not part of Checheno-Ingushetia before 1944 would be given to the republic instead. “This will not correct the situation, Anastas Ivanovich,” Malsagov responded. “People will oppose it. You are essentially depriving us of our homeland. There will be no republic.”<sup>138</sup>

Moscow’s work was made easier when the leaders of the neighboring republics ceded most of the areas in dispute back to Checheno-Ingushetia, thus largely restoring the autonomous republic to its original boundaries. “The First Secretary of the Dagestan Party

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<sup>136</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*, 201.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 405-406.

Obkom spoke,” recalled Malsagov. “He said that he would relinquish the five raions of Checheno-Ingushetia [that has been transferred to Dagestan in 1944] and would relocate his people to Dagestan. Then the Secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia rose and said: ‘We also relinquish the mountainous raions [transferred to Soviet Georgia in 1944] and return them to Checheno-Ingushetia.’”<sup>139</sup> In the end, the newly reconstituted Checheno-Ingush ASSR would receive the core territory of the former Groznyi Oblast’ without the Kizliar area, which was to be divided between the Stavropol Krai and Dagestan.<sup>140</sup> The restored republic also retained control over the Cossack Naurskii, Shelkovskii, and Kargalinskii raions, which were not part of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR before the 1944 deportation.<sup>141</sup> From Soviet Georgia, the autonomous republic received the parts of the Dusheti and Kazbegi raions located north of the Greater Caucasus range, thus “restoring the border that existed between the Russian SFSR and the Georgian SSR before 7 March 1944.”<sup>142</sup> From Dagestan, the Andalalskii, Vedenskii, Ritliabskii, and Suragatskii raions were restored to the reconstituted Checheno-Ingush ASSR, in addition to the “western portions of the Botlikhskii and Tsumadinskii raions.”<sup>143</sup>

The determination of the new boundary between Checheno-Ingushetia and the neighboring autonomous republic of North Ossetia was more contentious. The years of forced exile of the Ingush had created new realities on the ground with which the Soviet authorities had to contend, specifically Ossetian control of certain territories that were Ingush before the deportations. With the restoration of Ingushetia, the local leadership of

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>140</sup> Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, 101-103.

<sup>141</sup> GARF, f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1268, l. 169.

<sup>142</sup> GARF, f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1268, l. 170.

<sup>143</sup> GARF, f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1268, l. 169.

North Ossetia was open to returning most of these territories, but with significant exceptions. To its restored neighbor, it ceded the city of Malgobek and its surrounding area, as well as the “Kosta-Khetagurovskii raion and the northeastern part of the Pravoberezhnyi raion (within the borders of the former Achalukskii raion).”<sup>144</sup> However, it retained narrow a corridor connecting it with the northern Mozdok raion and, even more significantly, it retained the Prigorodnyi raion, which surrounded the North Ossetian capital of Orzhonikidze (today Vladikavkaz) and was economically tied to the city.<sup>145</sup> Such a step was incomprehensible to the Checheno-Ingush Orgkom, which regarded the district as “the heart of Ingushetia” given that “it was location of the village of Angusht, from which the name of the Ingush is derived.”<sup>146</sup> As scholar Pavel Polian wrote, the new political boundaries of the North Caucasus autonomies “contained ominous omissions and land deletions that foreshadowed the bloody conflicts of the future,” most notably the Ingush-Ossetian conflict of the early 1990s.<sup>147</sup>

Vladimir Agkatsev, the First Secretary of the North Ossetian Party Obkom, was opposed to ceding Prigorodnyi and argued that the raion had become “populated mainly by Ossetians and that it would be impractical to return it.”<sup>148</sup> In defending the decision to retain the raion, he stated that he sought to “create a center of friendship between the Ingush

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> During the NEP period, a rivalry existed between the Ossetians and the Ingush over the control of Orzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) itself. During that period, as with Grozny, the city was administered by the Soviet government as a separate political entity that served as the “‘shared’ capital between North Ossetia and Ingushetia until 1933–34, when Ingushetia merged with the Chechen AO, and Vladikavkaz became North Ossetia’s official capital.” As historian Alex Marshall writes, “the earlier compromise position nonetheless fomented for the rest of the 1920s what local historians in retrospect labelled an era of ethnic ‘parity’ between the two sides regarding control of the city.” See: Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 188. For more on the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, including contested claims to Vladikavkaz, see: Arthur Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt (1992-...): ego predistoriia i faktory razvitie* [Ossetian-Ingush Conflict (1992-Present): Background and Developmental Factors] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998).

<sup>146</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 406.

<sup>147</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*, 197.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 417.

and Ossetians” in the district. He also emphasized that North Ossetia “would accept all Ingush who were evicted from the area and resettle them in the raion and in Ordzhonikidze city.”<sup>149</sup> According to Caucasus scholar Arthur Tsutsiev, many observers believe that the cession of the three northern Cossack raions of Naurskii, Shelkovskii, and Kargalinskii to Checheno-Ingushetia was intended to serve as form of compensation for the loss of the Prigorodnyi, although “available historical record offers no evidence” of such an intention.<sup>150</sup> However, a desire on the part of the Soviet authorities, and in particular Mikoyan, to find a “compromise” solution to the problem for the stability of the North Caucasus is a more likely explanation. Moreover, a report from the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee from December 22, 1956 on the reconstitution of Checheno-Ingushetia offers another reason for the decision. The report, signed by Mikoyan, Voroshilov, Malenkov, Brezhnev, and Beliaev, indicates that the move to include these northern districts was made by the Soviet authorities to provide the republic with more space to accommodate the returning Chechen and Ingush populations.<sup>151</sup>

Regardless, the best efforts of Moscow and North Ossetia did little to soothe the loss of the Prigorodnyi area for the Ingush. “In all other respects,” recalled Desheriev, “they [the members of the Checheno-Ingush Orgkom] were very pleased with the results achieved in Moscow.”<sup>152</sup> However, with regard to the fate of Prigorodnyi, the Orgkom felt betrayed. To them, it seemed as though the Soviet government had imposed the decision on the area on them, despite their strong objections. “We believed that Mikoyan and others were ready to satisfy [Agkatsev’s] request,” recalled Malsagov. “We realized that they

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<sup>149</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 406.

<sup>150</sup> Tsutsiev, *Atlas of the Ethno-Political History of the Caucasus*, 103.

<sup>151</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 417.

<sup>152</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 250.



gave them the raion. I think there was a preliminary agreement [between Moscow and North Ossetia].”<sup>153</sup> However, according to Desheriev, the cession of the Prigorodnyi area to North Ossetia was not a conspiracy between Moscow and the Ossetians, but an accident that led to the creation of a tragic and complicated ethnic conflict. At a meeting on the restoration of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR attended by Mikoyan and Voroshilov, the Soviet government presented a letter to the Checheno-Ingush Orgkom from Agkatsev. As Desheriev recalled:

He requested the retention of the Prigorodnyi raion as part of the North Ossetian ASSR. The commission wanted to know the opinion of the members of the Orgkom on this letter. But at that moment they were too distracted by their own euphoria from the decision to return the Chechens and the Ingush to their original homeland and to restore the Checheno-Ingush ASSR. Their jubilation turned their heads away from the issue and, in the process, they forgot to respond to the letter from the Secretary of the North Ossetian Obkom. The government commission perceived the lack of reaction to this letter by the Orgkom as their agreement with its contents.<sup>154</sup>

The Checheno-Ingush Orgkom eventually “came to their senses” and “urgently wrote a letter addressed to the Government Commission on the need to return the Prigorodnyi raion to the Ingush people.”<sup>155</sup> They consulted with Desheriev on the composition. “There [with Desheriev], until morning, we prepared a note to the Presidium of the Central Committee,” recalled Malsagov. “In the morning we arrived at the hotel with this document, gathered our delegation and, having familiarized everyone with the situation, asked them to sign it. It was signed by Gairbekov and all members of the

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<sup>153</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 406.

<sup>154</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 249.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

delegation without exception. It was a protest against the transfer of the Prigorodnyi raion to North Ossetia.”<sup>156</sup> The letter read:

When it comes to the return of the Chechen-Ingush people to their former place of residence and the restoration of their national autonomy, it seems completely uncomfortable to raise the question of tearing away a raion from this autonomous republic, as some Ossetian comrades suggest. The people of their brotherly neighbor have endured so much suffering and, by the will of the party and government, they are returning to their native land. However, at this most solemn moment, instead of sympathizing with, and supporting, their brother in every possible way, they raise the question of excluding the Prigorodnyi raion from Chechno-Ingushetia, an ancestral Ingush territory, saturated with the blood of the Ingush people.<sup>157</sup>

The letter also raised the claim to the village of Angusht, as the origin of the Ingush ethnonym, and argued against the Prigorodnyi raion’s economic ties to North Ossetia and its ethnographic composition as a reason for its inclusion in the republic. “The raion’s entry into the Chechen-Ingush ASSR in no way disrupts supply to the city of Ordzhonikidze. Prigorodnyi will continue to supply the city of Ordzhonikidze with everything it can.” It stated the cession of the Prigorodnyi raion to North Ossetia was “an unfair solution to this issue” that can cause “completely undesirable phenomena in the relations between the Chechen-Ingush and Ossetian peoples.” It also attacked North Ossetian politicians who accused Chechens and Ingush of massacres against Ossetians. “We are talking about this matter only with the purpose of emphasizing the need, especially at this moment, to be more sensitive than ever to offended feelings,” the authors wrote.<sup>158</sup>

Gairbekov, Tangiev and Malsagov went to the Central Committee, where they gave a copy of the letter to Khrushchev’s assistant and “asked him to arrange a meeting between

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<sup>156</sup> Patiev, *Ingushi: Deportatsiia, vozvrashchenie, rehabilitatsiia*, 406-407.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 429-430.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

us and Nikita Sergeevich.”<sup>159</sup> However, although the letter reached Khrushchev, the Soviet authorities were reluctant to make additional border modifications. As Desheriev recounted years later:

Moscow told them: you should have raised this issue at a meeting of the Government Commission. Your silence was understood as agreement with the contents of the letter of the Secretary of the [North Ossetian] Obkom. The commission has already completed its work. And thus, the complex inter-ethnic problem of the Prigorodnyi raion arose. The members of the Orgkom were greatly upset by their mistake, foreseeing possible complications in Ossetia’s relations with the Ingush due to the problem of the Prigorodnyi raion.<sup>160</sup>

Stalin’s legacy of violent deportation had left Khrushchev and Mikoyan with a potentially explosive situation. To them, the best solution was to accept the circumstances that had evolved on-the-ground rather than risk a greater regional destabilization. Further border modifications in favor of the Ingush would have undoubtedly incurred accusations from the Ossetians of favoritism towards Checheno-Ingushetia on the part of Moscow. To avoid a potential Pandora’s box of conflicting ethno-territorial claims and counterclaims, the best solution from Moscow’s vantage point was to simply retain the newly established status quo, while encouraging coexistence between the neighboring peoples. However, that arrangement was never fully accepted by the Ingush and tension over the Prigorodnyi area persisted quietly until it boiled over with the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the explosion of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict of the 1990s.

The tension over the Prigorodnyi raion was only a preview of the much more dramatic violence that was to come, in connection with the physical return of the Chechens and Ingush to their historical homeland. The government’s formal lifting of restrictions on

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 406-407.

<sup>160</sup> Desheriev, *Zhizn vo mgle i borbe*, 250.

movement for the two ethnic groups prompted a gradual trickle into their former areas of residence even before the restoration of their autonomous republic. Overall, the repatriation of the repressed nations was a smooth process, with only a few sporadic cases of violence.<sup>161</sup> However, of those cases of violence, the majority involved the return of the Chechens and the Ingush. Even before their return, many of the Russian settlers who arrived after 1944 were already considering a return to central Russia as “tense competition for resources and living space arose.” Friction quickly emerged between the returnees, who wanted their old homes immediately, and the new residents who “could not, even if they desired, give up their household overnight.” As the Chechens returned and concern grew among the new Russian residents, the local authorities of the Groznyi Oblast’ “feared either possible counter-aggression from the Russian settlers or an uncontrollable exodus of Russians from the North Caucasus.”<sup>162</sup> The speed with which the Chechens and the Ingush were returning further exacerbated tensions. The situation finally reached a boiling point with the clashes in Groznyi in August 1958, which were ultimately put down forcefully by the central government.<sup>163</sup>

Historian Roy Medvedev once claimed that Mikoyan played a role in defusing tensions between the Chechen returnees and the new Slavic residents. However, no evidence exists to substantiate such a claim and Medvedev’s source is unclear.<sup>164</sup> Historian

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<sup>161</sup> On an example of the peaceful reintegration of one group of deported peoples (the Balkars), see Lanzillotti, “Land, Community, and the State in the North Caucasus,” 516-527, and Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 288-289.

<sup>162</sup> Vladimir Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, trans. Elaine McClarnand Mackinnon (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 88.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-109.

<sup>164</sup> Without specifying a date, Medvedev wrote that Mikoyan flew to the Checheno-Ingush ASSR on Khrushchev’s orders “when riots flared up in Groznyi due to hostile relations between the Russian population and the Chechens and Ingush returning to the republic.” According to Medvedev, Mikoyan managed to calm tensions “without bloodshed or mass arrests” (see Roy Medvedev, *Oni okružhali Stalina* [They Surrounded Stalin] (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1984), 168). The English translation of Medvedev’s book by

Vladimir Kozlov, who has written the most detailed account of the Thaw-era Chechen-Russian clashes, does not mention any involvement by Mikoyan in defusing tensions. Given his work in the North Caucasus and his later role in the rehabilitation of repressed nations, it would certainly not be outside the realm of possibility. In at least one instance, Mikoyan was apprised by local authorities in Central Asia of complications in returning Chechens and Ingush to their homeland. On May 30, 1957, Beibolotov, a member of the Obkom for Soviet Kyrgyzstan's Jalal-Abad Oblast', turned to CPSU Central Committee Secretary, Nikolai Beliaev, and to Mikoyan, to deal with the disruptions in the return of Chechen deportees. "Representative Tsutiev of the Orgkom for the Checheno-Ingush Republic for the Bazar-Korgon raion has prepared sixteen households for departure to the Caucasus," Beibolotov wrote. "Homes and cattle were sold. However, the departure is being delayed for unknown reasons. I ask for your intervention."<sup>165</sup> Later, members of the Checheno-Ingush facilitation commission complained that Aleksandr Iakovlev, the First Secretary of the Groznyi Oblast', was responsible for causing the disruption of departure by sending a telegram calling for the halt of sending additional families "under a special order."<sup>166</sup> It is unclear what role, if any, Mikoyan personally played in calming or redressing this unfortunate situation.

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Harold Shukman is even more curious because it specifies the year of Mikoyan's alleged visit to be 1961 (see Roy Medvedev, *All Stalin's Men*, trans. Harold Shukman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984), 50). However, there is no evidence to suggest that Mikoyan traveled to Groznyi at any time in 1961 with a mandate from Khrushchev to calm ethnic unrest.

<sup>165</sup> RGASPI f. 556, op. 14, d. 81, l. 59, and Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 159.

<sup>166</sup> RGASPI f. 556, op. 14, d. 81, l. 60, and Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 159.

## Conclusions

The thicket of political, territorial, and financial problems associated the return of the Chechens and the Ingush demonstrates that the Khrushchev government's adoption of a nationality policy favoring greater national expression did not find unanimous approval within the Soviet leadership. Although Mikoyan had longstanding experience with these groups in his management of difference in the North Caucasus, not all Soviet officials deferred to his experience and ideas. From the outset, although reform-minded political figures like Mikoyan favored the return of the deported peoples, Soviet state security officials were reluctant to allow any return to proceed, stemming from concerns over regional destabilization. This conflict echoed the broader struggle within the Soviet leadership on how to proceed on the development of the nationality policy after Stalin's death, between those who favored expanding the space for national expression and those who favored a more assimilationist approach.<sup>167</sup> When the state did allow most deported nationalities to return, the Khrushchev government made exceptions for certain groups, denying the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans the right to return to their homelands.

The process of restoring Checheno-Ingushetia presented another set of challenges for the Soviet state. The return of most of the deported peoples was a largely peaceful process. However, the return of the Chechens and the Ingush and the restoration of their republic proved to be a more taxing undertaking, encompassing complex disputes involving territory and property, as the conflict over East Prigorodnyi demonstrated. Looming large above these dilemmas stood the long shadow of the Stalinist authoritarian legacy, as manifested by the aftershocks of the deportations and the redrawing of

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<sup>167</sup> This struggle will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

boundaries in the region. As Chechen historian Abdullah Bugaev wrote, “if Stalin and Beria managed to deport hundreds of thousands of people – entire nations – to distant exile with lightning speed, in a matter of days during a difficult war, then it was not easy to return them to the land of their ancestors. And this was in peace time!”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Abdurakhmanov, Muzaev, Bugaev, et al. *Vosstanovlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR (1953-1962)*, 4.

## Chapter 5: Toward a More Perfect Union

The struggle to define the Soviet Union's post-Stalin nationality policy was manifested in several ways, most notably in tensions between Moscow and the republics over the level of local autonomy (the “tug of war” discussed in Chapter 2), but also within the Soviet leadership at the highest levels. Anastas Mikoyan was well-placed to influence the latter struggle. Having articulated a framework for the nationality policy in his 1954 Yerevan speech and playing a key role in the rehabilitation of the deported nationalities, he emerged as one of the main authorities on the nationality question. However, it was not until his work on the Third Soviet Communist Party Program of 1961, and as the head of the Subcommittee on Nationality Policy and National-State Construction (NPNSC) for the Soviet Constitutional Commission of the 1960s, that he became involved in the practical implementation of the post-Stalin nationality policy. These reform efforts, in particular the Party Program, represented an official rejection of Russification by the Party.<sup>1</sup> This history demonstrates that, although the Khrushchev era was initially characterized by alternating trends between centralization and devolution, ultimately the overall prevailing trend was toward greater devolution to the union republics and sub-national autonomous entities.

In an effort to better comprehend Khrushchevian nationality policy, several scholars of the post-Stalin Soviet nationality issue initially arrived at the conclusion that Nikita Khrushchev's 1958 education reform and the purge of “national communists” in

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the official rejection of the *sliianie* concept in the Third Party Program, policies favoring Russification continued gaining ground in certain parts of the Soviet Union, notably Siberia, the Far North, and the Far East, as Melissa Chakars and Yuri Slezkine remind us (see Chakars, *The Socialist Way of Life in Siberia: Transformation in Buryatia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014) and Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994)). It would have been interesting to see how these developments might have changed had the more ambitious visions of the NPNSC Subcommittee been realized, especially the efforts to increase representation for autonomous entities in the Soviet of Nationalities of the all-Union Supreme Soviet.



republics like Latvia represented a trend toward Russification.<sup>2</sup> They were correct, but only partially, due to the fact that these steps from Moscow came amid the broader effort to define the exact extent of permissible national expression.<sup>3</sup> As this chapter demonstrates, those moves only represented temporary policy trends and that the overall trend was in fact toward *more*, not less, decentralization. This shift was best illustrated by the Soviet leadership's decisive rejection of the concept of the merger (*sliianie*) of smaller nations into larger ones, due to Mikoyan's influence. However, as this chapter will also show, Mikoyan's efforts to have his positions adopted within the Party Program were met with resistance from within the Soviet leadership, and the reasons for their ultimate adoption by the Soviet government remain unclear.

The constitutional reform initiative took the decentralization tendencies of Khrushchev's government to an even greater level. The consensus among the members of the NPNSC Subcommittee, led by Mikoyan, was that the 1936 Stalin constitution represented an extreme form of centralization. Therefore, discussions around state reform focused on granting republics more rights in relation to Moscow, effectively "undoing" key aspects of the 1936 constitution. These proposed rights will be discussed in detail in the ensuing pages. However, one position in particular stands out – and that is Mikoyan's stance on the nature of the Soviet state structure. He contended that the USSR was *more* than the federation that it was, and that it was in fact a union of states, a difference that he

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<sup>2</sup> For examples, see Michael Loader, "The Centre-Periphery Relationship during Khrushchev's Thaw: The View from Latvia," *Peripheral Histories*, January 7, 2017, <https://www.peripheralhistories.co.uk/post/the-centre-periphery-relationship-during-khrushchev-s-thaw-the-view-from-latvia> (accessed March 15, 2021); William Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 22; Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy towards the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarianism to Post-Stalinist Society*, trans. Karen Forster and Ostwald Forster (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 245-258; and Robert Conquest, *Russia After Khrushchev* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 207.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny and Valerie Kivelson, *Russia's Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 330.

stressed was important. If implemented, the model envisioned by Mikoyan would have turned the USSR into something closer to a confederation, with much greater self-governance for the republics in relation to the central government in Moscow. His vision was not realized, but his articulation of it illustrates that support for decentralizing the state was strong at the highest levels within Khrushchev's government, well into 1964.

This chapter also responds to those scholars of federalism who argue that the Soviet federal model represented a "sham federalism," i.e., representative on paper but not in practice, due to the Communist Party's monopoly on power.<sup>4</sup> My evidence highlights that internal discussions surrounding Soviet federalism and political representation were far from rigid. In fact, they were often lively, as Mikoyan's July 1962 meeting with Soviet legal experts illustrates. In fact, Soviet reformers, including Mikoyan, were aware of Western criticisms of Soviet federalism, including the "sham" thesis, which they understood as a reflection of the excessively centralized Soviet constitution adopted by Stalin in 1936.<sup>5</sup> The NPNSC Subcommittee actively studied such criticisms, with an eye toward finding ways to make the Soviet federal model more representative for republics and autonomous entities. The subcommittee also reflected the diversity of the Soviet state, encompassing the First Secretaries of Armenia, Georgia, and Uzbekistan as well as representatives of other republics and autonomies. In the end, it grappled with centuries-old questions regarding the ways in which Russia/USSR as a multiethnic state should be governed, most notably regarding self-governance vs. centralization, the extent of benefits and obligations to national communities, and ultimately, the structure of the state itself.

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<sup>4</sup> John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Territorial Pluralism," in *Territorial Pluralism: Managing Difference in Multinational States*, ed. Karlo Basta, John McGarry and Richard Simeon (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 34.

<sup>5</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 64-78.

## **Nationality and the 1961 Party Program**

Mikoyan's involvement in helping to shape the nationality policy for the 1961 CPSU Party Program signaled his direct involvement in crafting and implementing a new official policy for Soviet nationalities. The 1961 Party Program served as the opening act for Khrushchev's broader reform agenda, which was to be concluded with the completion of the major constitutional reform. At the time that Khrushchev launched the process to develop the new Party Program in 1958, no new program had been adopted by the CPSU since 1919, although attempts were made by Stalin to introduce a new program in the 1930s and again in the 1940s.<sup>6</sup> Khrushchev saw his recent defeat of the "anti-Party group" as an opportune time to introduce a new program. Such an action would also allow Khrushchev "to claim an ideological continuity with Lenin's legacy" and to eliminate Stalinist deviations. Historian Alexander Titov noted that "the new Programme represented a revivalist vision of the Soviet communist project" that was "free from negative aspects" of Stalinism. "In this way, the adoption of the new Party Programme was to become a high point of Khrushchev's ideological and political revolution."<sup>7</sup>

Work on the new Party Program commenced in 1958 with the formation of a commission tasked with developing a draft of the text. It was headed by Khrushchev and consisted of Kuusinen, Mikoyan, Suslov, Pospelov, Ponomarev, Mitin and Iudin, with Khrushchev delegating the main work of drafting the program to Kuusinen and especially

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme and the fate of Khrushchev's reforms," in *State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Illic and Jeremy Smith (London: Routledge, 2009), 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme," 9.

Ponomarev.<sup>8</sup> Mikoyan was to play a key role in shaping the nationality portion of the program, entitled “Tasks of the Party in the Sphere of Nationality Relations.”<sup>9</sup> Informed by his intimate understanding of the issue as someone of non-Russian background with experience managing difference, Mikoyan worked to tone down the “internationalist” orientation of the text and the more utopian instincts of Khrushchev, making it more palatable to the concerns of the non-Russian nationalities. His suggested revisions were virtually all accepted into the final version of the program, with only minor revisions. Due to Mikoyan’s input, the final version of the text was not only deferential to nationality concerns, but often generous to them, most significantly by rejecting the assimilationist idea of the *sliianie* concept. In striking a balance between sensitivity toward national cultures and the struggle against national chauvinism, the section strongly echoed Mikoyan’s 1954 speech in Yerevan.

Although Mikoyan’s 1954 speech articulated the framework for what became the nationality platform of the 1961 Party Program, his ideas were not accepted without resistance. Scholars of Soviet Union have identified the debate over the direction of the post-Stalin nationality policy from the view of the “tug of war” between Moscow and the republics. However, it was also taking place within the highest levels of the Soviet central government, a reality that is evidenced by the fact that Mikoyan fought for the acceptance of his recommendations and that a few of them were ultimately not accepted by the

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<sup>8</sup> As Titov notes, “Kuusinen was soon sidelined in the work of the commission and Ponomarev assumed direct control over the commission’s work. This represented a victory for the middle line in terms of ideology, as Kuusinen was considered an ideologist keen on revising Stalin’s legacy.” (see Titov, “The 1961 Party Programme,” 10). For a detailed study on Kuusinen’s role in the development of the Party Program, see Jukka Renkama, *Ideology and Challenges of Political Liberalisation in the USSR, 1957–1961: Otto Kuusinen’s ‘Reform Platform’, the State Concept, and the Path to the 3rd CPSU Programme* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006), 284-332.

<sup>9</sup> For the full text of this section, see: CPSU, *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuzu* [Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1961), 112-116.

commission. The dynamics of this debate were raised by Ivan Tsameryan of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Mikoyan's July 1962 meeting with Soviet legal scholars in the context of the NPNSC Subcommittee and the Soviet constitutional reform. At the meeting, Tsameryan noted that "even before the publication of the draft party program," there were disputes over the future direction of the nationality issue.<sup>10</sup> He maintained that there were "two expressed positions" – the *sliianie* (merger) position and the *sblizhenie* (rapprochement) position. Tsameryan warned that the former "argued, with a view towards the eventual dissolution of the republics, that the question of improving national statehood should not even be considered." He stressed that the "publication of the draft party program dealt a strong blow to these views that preached the merging of nations."<sup>11</sup> Although we do not yet know the reasons for the victory of Mikoyan's vision (the *sblizhenie* position), his proximity to Khrushchev and his authority to speak on the nationality issue as a non-Russian with experience in managing difference in multiethnic regions offer some potential clues and explanations.

Already in the formative stages of the Party Program in August 1958, Mikoyan put forth his thoughts on the nationality issue. He took exception to the wording in the original draft plan that called for the voluntary merger (*sliianie*) of "smaller nations and ethnic groups into the larger socialist nations close to them" as part of the "process of consolidation of nationalities into socialist nations."<sup>12</sup> To this, the Armenian Mikoyan bristled, objecting that such a process should not be the job of the government or the Party, but that it could only occur naturally, if the smaller nations favored such an approach. "This

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<sup>10</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 59.

<sup>11</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 60.

<sup>12</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1619, l. 38.

is a natural process,” Mikoyan wrote, “not a Party task.”<sup>13</sup> Mikoyan’s criticism of the concept the “merger of nations” (*sliianie natsii*) became even more direct in his review of the initial draft of the Party Program in early 1961. The original draft stated that the “expanded communist construction within the USSR opens a new period in the development of national relations, characterized by a further rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) of nations and the preparation for the conditions of their impending merger.” From this phrase, Mikoyan heavily struck out the latter portion of this sentence (“and the preparation for the conditions of their impending merger”) with a thick blue pencil and underlined it in red.<sup>14</sup> He articulated his opposition to Ponomarev in the subsequent draft that he reviewed in 24-26 April 1961. “The program does not talk about the merger of nations,” he wrote. “Therefore, delete the words ‘and the preparation for the conditions for their impending merger’.”<sup>15</sup> Significantly, Mikoyan’s position on the *sliianie* issue was supported by Kuusinen in a letter to Khrushchev.<sup>16</sup>

In his review of the earlier 1961 draft, Mikoyan also crossed out an entire subsequent paragraph that dealt with the merger (*sliianie*) concept. The paragraph read:

With the victory of communism, the economic and moral-political community of the Soviet nations will grow even more, and the common communist features of their spiritual appearance will develop. Erasing national differences, especially linguistic differences, is a much longer process than erasing class boundaries. The merger of nations will occur not in the form of a one-time act, but as a result of a gradual and prolonged close communication of peoples after the victory of communism in all countries.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1616, l. 122.

<sup>15</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1619, l. 14 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1618, l. 137.

<sup>16</sup> Titov, “The 1961 Party Programme,” 15. The letter, as cited by Titov from RGASPI, f. 586, op. 1, d. 214, l. 5, was dated March 29, 1961.

<sup>17</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1616, l. 122.

The wording of this paragraph was slightly modified in the subsequent draft reviewed by Mikoyan in April 1961. However, he continued to strongly oppose its inclusion entirely, especially the final portion of the timeline of the eventual merger. From the paragraph, he recommended only saving the phrase “the development of common communist features of their spiritual appearance” and merging that line into an earlier paragraph.<sup>18</sup> The commission accepted Mikoyan’s suggestions with minor revisions for the final version of the program. However, the acknowledgement from the deleted paragraph that “erasing national differences, especially linguistic differences, is a much longer process than erasing class boundaries,” was retained.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, in opposition to the *sliianie* idea, Mikoyan completely struck out Section D in the early 1961 draft that called for the “complete overcoming of the remnants of the former backwardness of individual peoples of the USSR.” This section also called on the Party “to promote the objectively ongoing process of consolidating backward small peoples into socialist nations, both by merging small ethnic groups close to each other into a single nation on the basis of a common language voluntarily adopted by them, and by voluntarily merging small peoples and ethnic groups with the larger socialist nations close to them.”<sup>20</sup>

Another issue that Mikoyan raised in his revisions was the place of the Russian language in the Soviet nationality policy.<sup>21</sup> As he emphasized in his 1954 speech in Yerevan, Mikoyan strongly believed that although knowledge of Russian was essential as a state language of interethnic communication, its diffusion among non-Russian

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<sup>18</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1619, ll. 14-15 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1618, l. 138.

<sup>19</sup> CPSU, *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuzu*, 112-113.

<sup>20</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1616, l. 125.

<sup>21</sup> The language issue was a major point of contention between the republics and Moscow during the Thaw, especially in relation to Khrushchev’s 1958 educational reform. For further information, see Jeremy Smith, “The Battle for Language: Opposition to Khrushchev’s Education Reform in the Soviet Republics, 1958–59,” *Slavic Review* 76, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 983-1002.

nationalities had to be a voluntary process. In the early 1961 draft, Mikoyan heavily struck out a passage on the section regarding Russian language that argued that “national parochialism in the scope of language impedes cultural communication among the peoples of the USSR.”<sup>22</sup> In the next draft that Mikoyan reviewed in April 1961, the part of the nationality portion on language advised the Party “to contribute to the ongoing process of voluntarily learning the Russian language, alongside the native [national] language.” Emphasizing the importance of voluntarily learning Russian, Mikoyan circled the word *sodeistvovat*’ (to contribute) and noted to Ponomarev that “we should not talk about the Party’s assistance in the process of learning Russian alongside native languages.” The “national parochialism” passage remained in a slightly modified form: “National parochialism in the field of language impedes cultural communication among peoples and limits their ability to use the experience and achievements in the economic and cultural construction of all the peoples of the USSR.” However, it was still opposed by Mikoyan, who advised Ponomarev to remove it, which he did.<sup>23</sup>

Mikoyan’s recommendations on language were not only accepted in the final version of the program, but the new wording on the language issue was significantly more generous to the non-Russian nationalities than the earlier drafts. The completed program now called on the Party “to ensure the further free development of the languages of the peoples of the USSR, as well as the complete freedom for every Soviet citizen to speak, raise and educate their children in any language they wish, without allowing any privileges, restrictions or coercion in the use of certain languages.” The final version also underscored that “the ongoing process of voluntarily learning the Russian language, alongside the native

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<sup>22</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1616, l. 125.

<sup>23</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1619, l. 15 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1618, l. 141.



language, is of positive importance, as it promotes the mutual exchange of experiences, and the inclusion of each national and ethnic group in the cultural achievements of all other peoples of the USSR and in world culture.”<sup>24</sup> It concluded that, “in fact, the Russian language has become the common language of interethnic communication and cooperation of all the peoples of the USSR.”<sup>25</sup>

Mikoyan was also deferential to the distinctive national cultures of the republics and defended them in his comments on the drafts of the Party Program. For example, in the original draft of early 1961, Mikoyan crossed out a reference to the development of “new international forms of culture” that would supplant the particular and well-established national cultures of the Soviet republics.<sup>26</sup> He elaborated his thoughts on the matter further in his review of the April 1961 draft. One section of the April 1961 draft noted that “new, international forms of Soviet culture will arise and develop common to all Soviet nations” and that “the cultural treasury of each nation is increasingly enriched with creations that transcends its national forms.” To this, Mikoyan objected. “It is wrong to speak of a culture that is ‘international in form’, a culture ‘transcending its national forms’,” he wrote to Ponomarev. Instead, he suggested re-editing the end of the paragraph to read: “A common international culture is developing for all Soviet nations. The cultural treasury of each nation (*natsiia*) is increasingly enriched by creations that are acquiring international significance.”<sup>27</sup> Mikoyan’s wording was used almost exactly in the final version of the program, with only the word “significance” changed to “character.”<sup>28</sup> Another phrase of

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<sup>24</sup> CPSU, *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, 115-116.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1616, l. 124.

<sup>27</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1619, l. 15 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1618, l. 140.

<sup>28</sup> CPSU, *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz*, 115.

the initial 1961 draft referred to the future vision of a communist society with a “universal human culture” that would be “unified in form and content.” Again, in a nod to national cultures, Mikoyan crossed out the “unified in form” part and suggested changing it only to “unified in content.”<sup>29</sup> Then, in the April 1961 draft, Mikoyan suggested the removal of the phrase “form and content” entirely, and once again, this edit was accepted in the final version of the program.<sup>30</sup>

However, not all of Mikoyan’s editorial suggestions were included in the final text. For instance, in both drafts, he recommended removing a passage that called for a “shuffling of cadres between nations” as a preventive measure against “national parochialism.” He also recommended removing a subsequent passage that strongly condemned “any manifestation of national detachment in child-rearing” as “especially unacceptable.”<sup>31</sup> Both passages were retained in the final text, albeit in slightly toned-down forms.<sup>32</sup> The reasons for their retention are not known, although the general context of Moscow’s effort to control the parameters of national expression in republics like Latvia and Azerbaijan may offer some clues.<sup>33</sup> Overall, the fact that Mikoyan was unable to secure the inclusion of these revisions reminds us that his vision for the nationality policy did not find universal approval within the Soviet leadership.

The essence of the Party Program’s position on nationalities now closely followed the framework that Mikoyan articulated in his March 1954 speech in Yerevan. It would

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<sup>29</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1616, l. 124.

<sup>30</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1619, l. 15, GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1618, l. 140, and CPSU, *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuzu*, 115.

<sup>31</sup> GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1616, l. 126 and GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1618, l. 141.

<sup>32</sup> For example, the phrase “especially unacceptable” became simply “unacceptable” in the final version. See CPSU, *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuzu*, 116.

<sup>33</sup> 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*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 79-93.

also foreshadow his work on the nationality problem as part of Khrushchev's major constitutional reform effort. Mikoyan personally summarized his revisions to the program and emphasized their importance in his speech at the XXII Party Congress on October 21, 1961. "In our country, we are undergoing a process of a continued flourishing of culture that is national in form, socialist in content," he told the delegates. "At the same time, there is an increasing rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) of nations. This is a two-way process, both sides of which are of a progressive character. The [Party] Program unambiguously and very correctly states that artificially pushing for the rapprochement of nations, as well as deterring it, can only do harm." Mikoyan concluded his statement by emphasizing that the "development of the national cultures and economies of the national republics, in combination with the policy of their rapprochement, is one of the greatest driving forces on our path toward communism."<sup>34</sup>

### **Khrushchev's Constitutional Dreams**

Through his recommendations for the 1961 Party Program, Mikoyan established himself as the Kremlin's leading authority on the nationality issue. Khrushchev recognized his friend's expertise in his next major reform initiative – the drafting of a new Soviet constitution to supplant the "Stalin" constitution of 1936. Immediately following the completion of the new Party Program, Khrushchev turned his attention to laying the groundwork for a new constitution. His motives for initiating this process were similar to those behind the new Party Program, i.e., to restore the "principles of Leninism" and

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<sup>34</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, "Rech' tovarishcha A. I. Mikoyana" ["Speech of Comrade A. I. Mikoyan"], *Pravda*, October 22, 1961, 7.

“socialist democracy” (i.e., intraparty democracy within the CPSU), and to reflect the changes in Soviet society that had taken shape since the constitution of 1936, most notably the growing urbanization of the country. It was to be the crowning achievement of Khrushchev’s major reform agenda, and the wily First Secretary made no secret of his plans to the delegates in attendance at the XXII Party Congress in his address on October 17, 1961. “The Soviet Union has entered a new stage in its development and socialist democracy has risen to a higher level,” he told them. “A new constitution for the USSR, which we are starting to develop, must reflect new features in the life of Soviet society during the period of expanded communist construction.”<sup>35</sup>

In January 1962, Khrushchev followed this act by assembling a working group of legal scholars to begin work on the new constitution.<sup>36</sup> Then, at the session of the Supreme Soviet on April 25, Khrushchev delivered a speech on the drafting a new constitution. “Why is it necessary,” he asked, “to create a new constitution and not limit ourselves to the introduction of individual amendments and additions to the current constitution?” Echoing his remarks at the XXII Party Congress, he explained that the 1936 was “already outdated in its main provisions” and that it “fails to reflect the changes that have taken place in the life of society over a quarter of a century. It does not correspond to its current position.”<sup>37</sup> He continued:

The central thrust of the changes that have occurred in the Soviet Union since the adoption of the present constitution is the fact that socialism in our country has won

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<sup>35</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev, “Doklad Pervogo sekretaria TsK tovarishcha N. S. Khrushcheva” [“Report of the First Secretary of the Central Committee N. S. Khrushchev”], *Pravda*, October 18, 1961, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Sergei N. Khrushchev, *Reformator na zakate vlasti* [Reformer at the Dusk of Power] (Moscow: Veche, 2017), 136-137.

<sup>37</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev, “O vyrobotke proekta novoy konstitutsii SSSR – Vystuplenie Tovarischa N. S. Khrushcheva na sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR 25 apreliia 1962 goda” [“On the Development of the Draft of a New Constitution of the USSR – Speech by Comrade N. S. Khrushchev at the Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of April 25, 1962”], *Pravda*, April 26, 1962, 1.

a complete and final victory. The USSR has entered into a period of expanded communist construction. At this new stage of our development, the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat has grown into an all-people's socialist state, and proletarian democracy has grown into an all-people's democracy.<sup>38</sup>

He also highlighted the fact that the international situation had changed dramatically since 1936. "Our state has emerged from capitalist encirclement," he said, "and a great community of socialist countries [around our country] has been formed and strengthened." With the external situation under control, Khrushchev reasoned, now was the time to place greater emphasis on domestic reform and to develop what he called "socialist democracy." He stressed the necessity that "the new constitution should be the constitution of the all-people's socialist state, the constitution of communism under construction. It must meet the circumstances of this new historical period of our country's life."<sup>39</sup>

He went on to sketch the main aims of the future constitution. The first would be "to reflect the new stage of development of the Soviet state and society." The second would be to "raise socialist democracy to an even higher level." In order to achieve the latter, Khrushchev maintained that it would be necessary "to devise even stronger guarantees of the democratic rights and freedoms for workers," guarantees that would "strictly adhere to socialist legality." Likewise, it would also be of the utmost importance "to prepare the conditions for the transition to the communist self-governance of society," i.e., to enhance the participation of society in the political processes of the state.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, "O vyrabotke proekta novoy konstitutsii SSSR," 1. Although the formulation of the "all-people's state" is often attributed to Khrushchev (William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 510), in fact it was developed by Otto Kuusinen to replace the concept of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (see Renkama, *Ideology and Challenges of Political Liberalisation in the USSR, 1957-1961*, 308-309).

<sup>39</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, "O vyrabotke proekta novoy konstitutsii SSSR," 1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Khrushchev argued that the enhancement of democratic rights fully corresponded with the aim of restoring the Leninist principles of the Party and the Soviet state.<sup>41</sup>

Khrushchev concluded his speech by underscoring the “enormous, truly historical significance” of developing a new constitution, declaring that “the Soviet people will be acting as the pioneers of new forms of state and social organization, corresponding to the period of expanded communist construction.”<sup>42</sup> After Khrushchev’s speech, the Supreme Soviet established a Constitutional Commission with Khrushchev as its chairman.<sup>43</sup> Having demonstrated his expertise on nationality matters in the development of the 1961 Party Program, Mikoyan was appointed by Khrushchev to be the chairman of the Subcommittee on Nationality Policy and National-State Construction (NPNSC).<sup>44</sup> It is important to stress the full name of the subcommittee because it perfectly encapsulates its main task. Specifically, its remit was to overhaul the Soviet nationality policy by revamping the relationship between Moscow and the republics in a reformed political framework, in the spirit of the ideals articulated by Khrushchev in his April 25 speech. It consisted of 14 individuals, representing various parts of the Soviet state, including the First Secretaries of three union republics – Yakov Zarobyan of Armenia, Vasilii

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<sup>41</sup> As Khrushchev told his audience, “in the process of drafting the new constitution, it is necessary to use and to base all of our work on, the great ideological heritage of Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, the creator of the first constitutions of the world’s first socialist state.” He further stressed that the constitution must “fully embody the Leninist principles of social and political life as well as the organization and activities of the socialist state, as reflected and developed in the Soviet Communist Party Program.” (N. S. Khrushchev, “O vyrobotke proekta novoy konstitutsii SSSR,” 1.) For more on the importance of the “return to Leninism” during the Thaw, see Polly Jones, “From the Secret Speech to the burial of Stalin: Real and ideal responses to de-Stalinization,” in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era*, ed. Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 42-43.

<sup>42</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, “O vyrobotke proekta novoy konstitutsii SSSR,” 1.

<sup>43</sup> “Postanovlenie Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR o vyrobotke proekta novoy konstitutsii SSSR” [“Decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Development of the Draft of the New Constitution of the USSR”], *Pravda*, April 26, 1962, 1.

<sup>44</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 17.

Mzhavanadze of Georgia, and Sharaf Rashidov of Uzbekistan.<sup>45</sup> Nikolai Podgornyi (First Secretary of Ukraine) was also a member, but he apparently decided to leave the subcommittee.<sup>46</sup>

The subcommittee commenced its work almost immediately. First, in line with Khrushchev's call to base the development of the new constitution on Leninist principles, Mikoyan ordered his assistant, Vasilii Vasilievich Chistov, to compile a report comparing the original wording on the nationality issue in the 1918 Russian SFSR constitution and the 1924 Soviet constitution with that of the 1936 "Stalin" constitution. A trained historian with knowledge of German, Chistov was a "laconic, calm, thoughtful, highly intelligent and decent man" in the words of Sergo Mikoyan.<sup>47</sup> His completed report, which he presented to Mikoyan on June 22, 1962, closely scrutinized the texts of the 1918 and 1924 constitutions. His comparative study underscored the ways in which these earlier constitutions favored greater self-governance over the centralization characteristic of the 1936 constitution, especially regarding the right of secession and the competencies of the republics in relation to the central government in Moscow.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. The other subcommittee members included the Chairman of the Soviet of the Union (Ivan Spiridonov of Leningrad) and the Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities (Jānis Peive of Latvia, who also concurrently served as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Latvia). Others on the subcommittee included Tursunoi Akhunova (a Supreme Soviet Deputy and forewoman of the Kirov *kolkhoz* from Uzbekistan), Vasilii Kozlov (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus), Aleksandr Korneichuk (Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine), Turabai Kulatov (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan), Dinmukhamed Kunaev (Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Kazakhstan), Ziia Nuriev (First Secretary of the Obkom of Bashkiria), Nikolai Organov (Soviet Ambassador to Bulgaria), and Vladimir Svetlichnyi (a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet and Hero of Socialist Labor from Krasnodar).

<sup>46</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Sergo A. Mikoyan, "Anastas Mikoyan – Zhizn', otdannaia narodu [Anastas Mikoyan – A Life Devoted to the People]" (unpublished manuscript, Autumn 2009), typescript, 662.

<sup>48</sup> For Chistov's full comparative report, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 24-30.

## The July Meeting

On July 28, Mikoyan arranged a meeting in Moscow with Soviet legal scholars to discuss various aspects of the nationality issue and the Soviet state structure.<sup>49</sup> Mikoyan identified five specific aims for the meeting at its start. These included (1) building upon the nationality platform of the 1961 Party Program; (2) discussing “those elements of the first Russian constitution and the first constitution of the USSR to which it would be advisable to return”; (3) determining which “Leninist formulations and statements on the national question” should be used in the constitution; (4) reflecting on Stalin’s distortions of the nationality policy during his rule and recommending changes; and (5) expressing opinions on ways to improve mechanisms of the state in the aspect of national policy, “as socialist democracy develops.”<sup>50</sup> The July meeting was to set the stage for a later working meeting that Mikoyan would hold with the subcommittee members in October.<sup>51</sup> It proved to be productive, highlighting fundamental questions related to (a) the framework for the reform effort, (b) the structure the Soviet state, (c) the rights of the union republics in relation to Moscow, and (d) the position of national autonomous entities, and the criteria for the potential elevation of some of them to the status of union republics.

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<sup>49</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 46. The individuals present at the meeting included Petr Romashkin and Viktor Kotok of the Institute of State and Law of the Soviet Academy of Sciences; Anushavan Arzumanyan of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Soviet Academy of Sciences; Mikhail Kammari and Ivan Tsameryan of the Institute of Philosophy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences; Aleksei Lepeshkin and David Zlatopolskii of Moscow State University, Hatik Azizyan, Head of the Department of Science at Pravda; and Aleksei Orlov of the Legal Department of the Administration of the Soviet Council of Ministers.

<sup>50</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 46-47.

<sup>51</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 46.



## The Framework for Reform

In their meeting with Mikoyan, the legal scholars emphasized the importance of using the new Party Program as a basis for constitutional reform in the nationality sphere. For example, Petr Romashkin emphasized that the constitution must follow “the main direction in the development of national statehood [as] defined in the Party Program.”<sup>52</sup> In practice, this meant a rejection of assimilation and centralization, and the enhancement of the rights of the union republics and national autonomous units, proceeding from the “comprehensive development of socialist democracy” in the words of Pavel Semenov of the Institute of State and Law.<sup>53</sup> Ivan Tsameryan not only concurred with such opinions, but further noted the significance of the exclusion of the merger (*sliianie*) concept from the program and the greater emphasis on the idea of a rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) of nations instead.<sup>54</sup> He emphasized that the new constitution “must be based entirely on those principles that are laid out in the new party program.”<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the new Party Program, the legal scholars attached great importance on “returning to Leninism” in the constitutional reform process and basing the new constitution on the original principles and ideals articulated by Lenin, from which, they argued, the 1936 Stalin constitution deviated.<sup>56</sup> Viktor Kotok, of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, was especially keen on emphasizing this issue. Following “from Lenin’s experience in constitutional construction,” Kotok advocated that the constitution should open with a preamble that articulated the “essence of the state and the position of the

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<sup>52</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 47.

<sup>53</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 38, l. 82. Semenov was not in attendance at the meeting, but he sent his writings on the constitutional reforms to Anushavan Arzumanyan on July 18, 1962. For his writings to Arzumanyan and the NPNSC Subcommittee, see all materials in RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 38.

<sup>54</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 60.

<sup>55</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 59.

<sup>56</sup> For the context, see Jones, “From the Secret Speech to the burial of Stalin,” 42-43

individual in society.” He turned to the 1918 Russian SFSR constitution, underscoring that it began the Declaration of the Rights of Workers to the Exploited People and that a similar declaration should also appear in the new constitution.<sup>57</sup> He argued that, according to his interpretation of the Leninist approach, the national question should be articulated after this declaration as a “subordinate question.” Kotok also critiqued the fact that the 1936 constitution understood the matter of the state structure as “only a national problem” and that such an approach was “misleading” because Lenin did not view the national question and the question of state structure as synonymous. Therefore, he advocated that the formulation of the 1936 Stalin constitution “should be abandoned” and that the articulation of the state structure “must be followed, according to Lenin.”<sup>58</sup>

### **The Structure of the State**

One of the central issues addressed at the meeting was the nature of the Soviet state structure. On this matter, those present had a variety of opinions. David Zlatopolskii of Moscow State University was of the opinion that the Soviet Union should be identified in the constitution as a federal state. He noted that such wording did not exist at all in the current constitution and that this issue over terminology regarding the state structure caused much debate among Soviet lawyers and the need for clarity.<sup>59</sup> He stressed that the new constitution needed “a special chapter,” called “State Structure of the USSR” or “The USSR – A Federal State,” which would highlight the “matter of the principles of federation, specifically those principles of our Soviet federation that were developed by Lenin.”

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<sup>57</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 55.

<sup>58</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 56.

<sup>59</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 51.

Zlatopolskii noted that the 1936 constitution enshrined only two of these principles, while Lenin had in fact developed five.<sup>60</sup> He added that “from the omitted principles of the constitution, it should be said that the Soviet federation is built on the basis of *soviets* guided under the leading role of the Communist Party,” with *soviets* referring to the various governing bodies of the state. He stressed that the construction of the federation needed to be “anchored in the national principle,” referring to the state’s ethno-federal structure.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, Zlatopolskii maintained that there should be provisions regarding the “prospects for the development of the Soviet federation.” These provisions would identify the USSR as a “developing national federation” which, according to the Marxist dialectical view of history, “will probably be the last socialist and communist federation, and its development will eventually lead to the elimination of statehood” with the realization of a communist society.<sup>62</sup> Tsameryan mostly concurred with Zlatopolskii, although he did not express an opinion on the utopian vision of the elimination of statehood, and in fact expressed a rejection of the *sliianie* concept.<sup>63</sup>

Mikoyan took a broader view on the matter of state structure and differed from Zlatopolskii and Tsameryan. He felt that the Soviet state, from its inception, was intended to be something more than a federation, with much greater sovereignty devolved to the republics. He believed that the USSR was intended to be a free union of states, on the order of a confederation. Mikoyan expressed this point of view earlier in his speech at the XXII Party Congress, when he underscored Lenin’s original vision of a “union of equal and sovereign national republics” and Lenin’s rejection of “the point of view of those who

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<sup>60</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 51-52.

<sup>61</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 52.

<sup>62</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 55.

<sup>63</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 60.

opposed the creation of a union of independent national republics and only proposed their inclusion into the Russian SFSR with the rights of autonomy.” In that speech, Mikoyan stressed that Lenin recognized the Russian SFSR “as equal with the Ukrainian SSR and others, and that together, and on an equal footing with them, they entered into a new union, a new federation, the Union of Soviet Republics.”<sup>64</sup> Mikoyan’s view was also reflected in the great value that he attached to the realization of Armenian statehood within the context of the USSR, as he expressed in his memoirs and in his notes for his March 1954 speech in Yerevan.<sup>65</sup> As such, he was very sensitive in maintaining, and even expanding, the rights of republics and national autonomous units.

At his meeting with the legal scholars, Mikoyan emphasized the importance of differentiating the concept of the union from that of a federal state, noting that “each word acquires a specific meaning” and that the matter had to be considered by the subcommittee “thoroughly.”<sup>66</sup> The distinction of wording did indeed matter because the use of the term *union state* rather than *federal state* implied, at least in theory, that much greater powers should be devolved to the units of the state in the relation to the central government. Mikoyan conceded that a union state was a *type* of federation, but not a federal state. He remarked that the federal state, confederation, and autonomy were “all forms of a federation, but with different content.” However, he emphasized that a union was a

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<sup>64</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, “Rech’ tovarishcha A. I. Mikoyana” [“Speech of Comrade A. I. Mikoyan”], *Pravda*, October 22, 1961, 7.

<sup>65</sup> For example, in his memoirs, Mikoyan wrote that “every decent Armenian, understands that an inextricable link with Russia is a guarantee for the physical existence of the Armenian people and the preservation of their national statehood” (Anastas Mikoyan, *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o Minuvshem* [So It Was: Reflections on the Past] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2014), 195). In his notes for his March 1954 speech, Mikoyan noted that “under Soviet power, Armenia regained its statehood that had been lost for centuries, and experienced national and social renewal,” adding that “the victory of socialism turned Armenia into a flourishing republic on the doorstep of the East” (GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1110, l. 324).

<sup>66</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 62.

“federation of a different kind, formed on the basis of sovereign states and their unity.”<sup>67</sup> He also argued that there were two types of federation within the Soviet Union. One type was the federative union republic, like the Russian SFSR or the short-lived Transcaucasian SFSR. The other was the union (*soiuz*) state itself, encompassing the fifteen Soviet socialist republics.<sup>68</sup> “This word *soiuz* is Russian,” Mikoyan highlighted, “but a different concept is embedded within it, even though theoretically union and federation are one and the same.” He went on to note that “this *soiuz* is the form [of state] that has developed in our country historically and is most suitable for us.”<sup>69</sup>

Mikoyan’s emphasis, that a union implied more than federal state, also implied that the USSR, although theoretically a union, did not function as such under the conditions of the Stalin constitution of 1936. Anushavan Arzumanyan of the Academy of Sciences raised this point at the meeting. “We have a lot of centralization, and even the United States is also a federal state with less centralization.” Mikoyan responded that the U.S. was a “united state” that combined elements of a union state and a federal state. By contrast, he stressed that the USSR was a “union of national, sovereign republics.” “There is a shade here to which you are not attaching importance, therefore you insist on introducing the term *federation*. We need to think about this,” he said. However, Mikoyan but did not directly address Arzumanyan’s point on the disconnect between the theory of the USSR as a union, and the reality of the centralized state as it existed.<sup>70</sup>

Another point that Mikoyan did not address was the status of autonomous entities in such an arrangement. Both within the NPNSC Subcommittee and outside of it, Mikoyan

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<sup>67</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 61.

<sup>68</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 62.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

favored devolving greater powers to these entities, especially autonomous republics.<sup>71</sup> However, it is unclear how he could reconcile this position with his vision for a significantly more devolved union state. If Moscow's powers were to be greatly diminished in favor of the union republics, would it not weaken the ability of autonomous entities like Abkhazia and South Ossetia to influence their position vis-à-vis the union republic to which they were subordinated, i.e., Georgia? Did Mikoyan and his constitutional framers envision some sort of veto in case their autonomy would be threatened by Tbilisi? On this matter, they have left us without answers.

The picture becomes even less clear when dealing with numerically smaller non-titular nationalities, such as the Talysh and Udi of Azerbaijan.<sup>72</sup> In his contributions to the Third Party Program, Mikoyan rejected the assimilation of smaller nations into larger ones and favored mutual respect for different national cultures. In his writings, he praised the cultural achievements of non-titular groups, like the Avars of Dagestan.<sup>73</sup> However, it is unclear how he could reconcile this position with a much more devolved union state in which such groups might be threatened by assimilation from titular republican leaderships. If Mikoyan and his framers sought to base their vision for reform on the new Party Program and the rejection of the *sliianie* concept, then did they envision certain “federal protections” for the preservation of the languages and cultures of these indigenous groups? Did they

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<sup>71</sup> In his consultations with the working group on autonomous entities for the NPNSC Subcommittee, Mikoyan expressed opposition to having union republics approve the constitutions of autonomous republics (RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 209). He also expressed opposition to the proposal put forth by Vasilii Kozlov of Belarus to downgrade all autonomous republics to the status of autonomous oblasts (RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 84-85). Finally, there is the extensive record of Mikoyan's work involving the rehabilitation of the deported peoples of the North Caucasus (see Chapter 4) and his sympathetic but cautious attitude toward the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (see Chapter 3).

<sup>72</sup> For further discussion on non-titular nationalities in the Soviet Union, see Krista A. Goff, *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

<sup>73</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *USSR: A United Family of Nations*, trans. David Skvirsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 66-67).

see their reform efforts as an initial step toward these more specific issues? For a subcommittee whose remit was nationality policy, in addition to national-state reform, such a path forward would seem logical, but on this matter, we are also left without answers.

### **Republican Rights**

Mikoyan and the legal scholars also saw the need to clarify the relationship between the republics on one hand, and the central government in Moscow on the other. Zlatopolskii argued for the necessity of greater clarity in the process of delineating the responsibilities of the union republics from the union government in the sphere of legislative activity:

The question of the competences of the USSR warrants careful consideration. Now the rights of the union republics are expanding, and in the area of legislative activity, this fact must be brought to its logical conclusion. We say that the USSR establishes the basis of legislation in such-and-such a sphere, but it is equally important to emphasize that the union republics *legislate* in this area. So, for example, the USSR establishes legislative principles in the field of education, and then the union republics have the right to legislate in the field of education. Otherwise, we get a contradiction. Instead, we said that the union republics do not legislate in the field of education, but that the union republics were to *lead* in the sphere of primary, secondary, and higher education. But leadership is one thing, and legislation is another. Leadership is carried out by the ministry, and legislation is carried out by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the union republics.<sup>74</sup>

He also underscored the role of the republics in providing local security. “In the 1936 Constitution,” he maintained, “it says that the USSR carries out state security, but that the union republics do not.” However, referring to local divisions of the KGB in the union republics, he stressed that in reality, republics “do carry out state security.”<sup>75</sup>

Zlatopolskii asserted that the position of the citizen in relation to the state and the union republic needed clarification. “In the 1924 constitution, it is stated that every citizen

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<sup>74</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 54.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

of a union republic is a citizen of the USSR,” he noted. “However, in the current constitution, this question is presented from the perspective of the rights of the citizen, and not from the perspective of the rights of the union republic.” Instead, he advocated a different *matryoshka*-esque formulation in which each union republic has its own citizenship and is therefore tasked with overseeing citizenship locally and then nationally, as part of the USSR as a whole.<sup>76</sup> Kotok raised similar concerns regarding the relationship between the all-Union Soviet constitution and the constitutions of the union republics. He noted that, in the current constitution, the constitution states that the union republics have their own constitutions “built *in full accordance* with the constitution of the USSR, taking into account the conditions of that union republic.” However, he highlighted that it was impossible to reconcile “*full accordance*” and take into account the local republican conditions, favoring instead to simply drop the “full.” “It is incorrect to write that the constitution of the union republics should be built in full accordance with the constitution of the USSR,” he stressed. “It should be about principled compliance.”<sup>77</sup>

Zlatopolskii also raised the issue about aspects of the constitution that he argued were “fictitious.” “Lenin said that bourgeois constitutions are fictitious,” he told his colleagues. “Of course, the socialist constitution was never fictitious, but it is necessary to frankly say that certain provisions in our constitution are of a fictional character.”<sup>78</sup> Such “fictional” provisions were those republican rights articulated in the constitution that in fact did not exist, such as national military formations in each union republic. Zlatopolskii’s position was that such “fictitious” provisions were unnecessary and should therefore be

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<sup>76</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 53.

<sup>77</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 56.

<sup>78</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 53.



scrapped, but the other attendees at the meeting disagreed. Tsameryan felt that the question was “about granting rights that may or may not be exercised.” He added that “rights must be written down, but in no way should that mean that each republic is obligated to exercise all these rights. It is necessary to proceed from specific conditions in each individual case.”<sup>79</sup> Mikoyan agreed with Tsameryan. “One must distinguish fiction from abstract law, which will never be used,” he said. “It is better to have a right and never use it, rather than to be deprived of this right entirely.”<sup>80</sup> Mikhail Kammari of the Academy of Sciences noted that such “fictitious” items “inevitably emerge in the sense that today they are needed, but then they lose their meaning later.” He therefore recommended that these provisions should be changed, but that “their foundations should be more stable.”<sup>81</sup>

In terms of the rights of republics, one that garnered particular attention among the meeting’s attendees was the right of secession, which had been guaranteed by the 1924 Soviet constitution. Although it is unclear what the actual process of secession entailed, the meeting’s attendees regarded it as “one of the most vivid expressions of sovereignty” for the union republics and that it “testified to the voluntary nature of the unification of the republics into the USSR.”<sup>82</sup> Zlatopolskii viewed secession as a basic republican right. Finding the formulation on sovereignty in the 1936 constitution unsatisfactory, he proposed a new one: “the union republics, having entered the USSR, have limited their competences, transferring parts of their powers to the union government, but also aim to secure the guarantees of their sovereignty.”<sup>83</sup> He noted that it was necessary to enshrine the guarantee

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<sup>79</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 61.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 58.

<sup>82</sup> Quote from Viktor Kotok, of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 56).

<sup>83</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 52-53.

of secession in Article 4, given that, according to Article 6, Article 4 could be amended with the consent of all union republics. Zlatopolskii proposed adding to Article 4 that the provision on the right of secession “cannot be changed by anyone at all” and that “it is based on the federal nature of the unification of the republics.”<sup>84</sup> Kotok concurred, adding that “the procedure for changing the constitution, as articulated in the 1924 constitution, should be restored.” He further warned that “according to our current constitution, any article can be changed, which means that the all-Union Supreme Soviet can change the article on the right to secede.”<sup>85</sup>

Heated discussion arose among the attendees regarding a proposal raised by D. A. Gaidukov, the Head of Sector of the Institute of Law of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, with respect to the idea of abolishing the Soviet of Nationalities. The latter formed one of two chambers of the all-Union Supreme Soviet, the other being the Soviet of the Union. The Soviet of the Union was comprised of representatives of electoral districts, with each deputy representing three hundred thousand people. The Soviet of Nationalities represented the interests of the country’s many ethnic groups across the various union republics, autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, and national okrugs.<sup>86</sup> At the beginning of the meeting, Romashkin remarked that “some comrades [at the institute] have expressed the idea that since we have existed for more than 40 years, then perhaps there will be no need for a second chamber [i.e., the Soviet of Nationalities] in the future, or to simply leave it in the form of a chamber in which the interests of only the union republics

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<sup>84</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 53.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Mandel'shtam, L. I., ed. *Sbornik zakonov SSSR i ukazov prezidiuma verkhovnogo soveta SSSR (1938 – iul' 1956 gg.)* [Collection of Laws of the USSR and Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1938 – July 1956)] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1956), 7.

are to be represented.” However, he added that “it seems to me that this issue is not yet ripe for discussion.”<sup>87</sup>

Mikoyan immediately reacted negatively to the idea of abolishing the Soviet of Nationalities, but Romashkin assured him and the others that “this proposal is not supported by the majority of lawyers, and we believe such a move would be premature, because from the first constitution, a bicameral system was established.” Romashkin was quick to note the fairness of the bicameral system, given the multiethnic composition of the state. “For example,” he said, “it is not by chance that now a special economic committee has been created in the Soviet of Nationalities.” Romashkin not only defended the idea of retaining the Soviet of Nationalities, but also advocated for the establishment of a bicameral system for the Russian SFSR. “The Russian Federation is determined by the multinational composition of the population,” he said. “But there is no representation for nationalities in the Supreme Soviet of that republic. There is only one chamber. This fact raises the question of whether the Russian SFSR should also have a two-chamber system. Perhaps this question merits deliberation and discussion.”<sup>88</sup>

Mikoyan was not the only one who reacted negatively to Gaidukov’s proposal. Noting the sharp rejection of the *sliianie* concept in the new Party Program, Tsameryan argued that “consequently, the point of view, which some comrades hold, that the Soviet of Nationalities in the all-Union Supreme Soviet should be liquidated, is completely wrong.”<sup>89</sup> For his part, Lepeshkin not only vocally opposed liquidating the Soviet of Nationalities, but also advocated devising “constitutional guarantees that ensure national

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<sup>87</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 47.

<sup>88</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 47-48.

<sup>89</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 60.

sovereignty.” “From the very beginning,” he noted, “I have been opposed to proposals along the lines of liquidating the Soviet of Nationalities in the all-Union Supreme Soviet. Our country is a multinational, union state, and this reality enhances our state. It ensures a truly national representation, as well as the participation of all nations in the resolution of nationwide questions.”<sup>90</sup> In fact, like Romashkin, Lepeshkin felt that mechanisms for the representation of Soviet nationalities should not only be preserved but enhanced. “I think that the new constitution should strengthen and preserve national representation,” he said. He strongly emphasized that “the nationwide constitution of the state would only stand to gain significantly if it were to succeed in better and more fully offering representation to our national republics, national autonomous oblasts, and national okrugs. The nature of our state is determined by its multinational composition.”<sup>91</sup>

Lepeshkin went on to criticize the excessive centralization of the Soviet state under the terms of the 1936 constitution. In particular, he pointed to Article 14 of the 1936 constitution, which articulated the duties of the Soviet central government. Lepeshkin believed that power was excessively concentrated by the central authorities and that more of it needed to be delegated out to the union republics. He also said that foreign observers had criticized this feature of the Soviet constitution. “We believe that it [Article 14] unsatisfactorily resolves the problem of delimiting issues between the competence of the USSR and the union republics,” he told his colleagues. He emphasized this problem within the context of foreign perceptions of the Soviet Union. “We are accused abroad that we are a union state in form only,” he said. “Article 14 is structured in such a way that almost everything belongs to the competence of the Soviet central government, leaving the union

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<sup>90</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 50.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

republics with nothing. One can interpret Article 14 as meaning that nothing will remain of the sovereignty of the union republics.” Lepeshkin stressed that the new constitution “should proceed from the interests of the unity of the union republics with centralization in the main matters of economic life.” “It should really be the constitution of the union state,” he emphasized to his colleagues. “It must define the constitutional guarantee of the sovereignty of the union republic.”<sup>92</sup>

### **Status of National Autonomies**

A major point of discussion was the criteria for what constituted a union republic, as opposed to an autonomous republic, oblast’, or okrug. Moreover, if certain autonomous republics met certain criteria, could they be elevated to the rank of a full union republic? Petr Romashkin thought so, especially in the cases of Tatarstan and Bashkiria, two autonomous republics within the Russian SFSR. Romashkin stated that “in his report on the draft [1936] constitution, Stalin mentioned that a proposal had been made to turn the Bashkir and Tatar [autonomous] republics into union republics.”<sup>93</sup> However, the *vozhd* rejected such an idea on the basis that the two autonomies failed to meet his criteria for becoming union republics. These criteria include (1) sharing a border with a foreign state, (2) having a compact ethnic majority of the titular group, and (3) having a relatively large population, comprising at least one million people. “In modern conditions,” Romashkin said, “it seems to me that such criteria are no longer suitable for defining a union republic.” He specifically noted the ways in which the Soviet-backed Warsaw Pact states had changed conditions for “borderland” union republics like Ukraine and Belarus. Instead of bordering

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<sup>92</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 50-51.

<sup>93</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 48.

“hostile” capitalist states, they now bordered friendly “socialist” allied countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.<sup>94</sup>

Highlighting the “socialist surrounding” of formerly “borderland” republics as an example, Romashkin reasoned that new criteria were needed for the elevation of autonomous republics:

Is it necessary to introduce a new position regarding the elevation of autonomous republics to the status of union republics? Evidently, it is necessary, because alongside the union republics there are such autonomous republics where industry is even more developed than in some union republics, agriculture is not inferior, etc. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account the process that has occurred in recent years in which the indigenous population no longer comprises the majority in a number of union republics. For example, ethnic Kazakhs comprise only 28% of the population in Kazakhstan. The process of population movement among the republics has been very rapid. Therefore, in particular, there was a proposal to transfer all the autonomous republics to the status of union republics.<sup>95</sup>

However, Romashkin was not prepared to go so far. “I am not ready to make concrete proposals on this matter,” he said. “However, the question essentially remains – whether it is necessary in our new constitution to retain the old positions for determining the criteria of the union republics, or to take a slightly different path.” He cautioned those at the meeting that these two questions merited careful consideration.<sup>96</sup>

Aleksei Lepeshkin agreed with Romashkin. “It seems to me,” he said, “that now we have every reason to study and realize the question of the need for further development of the union state and, especially, the possibility of elevating a number of autonomous republics to the status of union republics.” He specifically endorsed the idea of elevating

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. For historical background on the changes in Kazakhstan’s demographics during the early decades of the Soviet Union, see Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>96</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 48-49.

the Tatar ASSR to union republic status, noting that it was “no way inferior to a number of union republics.” Although he expressed the point of view that “not all autonomous republics needed to be elevated to the status of union republics,” he believed that the issue nevertheless merited discussion. On Tatarstan, he further elaborated:

We should be guided by such signs as the compactness of the national population, which, for example, is 52 to 53% in the Tatar ASSR. The frontiers of the republic are of great importance. The factor of economic development, which Stalin ignored to a certain extent ignored, should also be taken into consideration. Stalin said that the population factor should serve as the basis for elevation. However, it seems to me that the economic factor is of major importance for deciding the issue of elevating an autonomous republic to union status.<sup>97</sup>

Additionally, Lepeshkin spoke in favor of elevating autonomous oblasts to the status of autonomous republics. “For example,” he said, “on the economic and cultural level, the Adyghe Autonomous Oblast’ is not inferior to a number of existing autonomous republics.”<sup>98</sup> He likewise spoke in favor of promoting autonomous okrugs to the status of autonomous oblasts.<sup>99</sup> He also added that there needed to be a “special chapter” added to the constitution “on the rights of autonomous republics,” in which “it is necessary to

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<sup>97</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 49.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. The Soviet government eventually elevated the Adyghe Autonomous Oblast’ to the status of an ASSR within the Russian SFSR. This move was made by Moscow in July 1991, one month before the August coup attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev and five months before the dissolution of the USSR (see “Osnovnye svedeniia” [“Basic Information”], *Respublika Adygeia*, <http://www.adygheya.ru/about/information/> (accessed September 5, 2020)).

<sup>99</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 50. On the matter of the okrugs, Lepeshkin specifically said the following: “When the working group commenced its work on the first materials for the new constitution, we thoroughly studied the question of the national okrugs and arrived at an almost unanimous opinion that it would be possible to elevate several national okrugs to the category of national autonomous oblasts, provided that they meet the right conditions. Now I do not exactly recall, but the discussion centered on three national okrugs. The rest represent purely administrative units. It appears that the question of elevating the status of national okrugs in accordance with the current conditions is ripe. After all, they were formed in 1930, starting with nine, followed by the rest. At the time, they had their purpose, as a means to unite the nomadic soviets. They justified themselves then, but I think that now, in the light of the preparation of the new constitution, the time has come to think about national okrugs.”

stipulate the basic principle of the formation and elevation of autonomous republics to the status of union republics.”<sup>100</sup>

Zlatopolskii also added his thoughts to the discussion on the elevation issue, arguing that some of Stalin’s criteria for determining union republic status were correct, while others were not. In particular, he singled out Stalin’s criterion that a republic needed a population of at least one million because it could then defend its sovereignty. “However,” Zlatopolskii noted, “even such a republic as Ukraine, with a population of 40 million, was unable to defend itself alone against Hitler’s hordes. It was only possible to resist them through joint efforts [with the rest of the USSR].”<sup>101</sup> He also took aim at Stalin’s belief that economic development “did not play a role” in determining the elevation of an autonomous republic to union status. On this matter, he argued that Stalin was also “incorrect” and that “the economic growth of the republic makes it more influential.”<sup>102</sup> However, in contrast to Romashkin, Zlatopolskii did agree with Stalin’s position that a union republic needed to share at least one external border with another state. “The correct position is that a union republic should be a borderland republic,” he said. “From this point of view, the surrounding – whether socialist or capitalist – does not matter. If the provision is written that the republic has the right to secede, then the provision that a union republic should be a borderland republic must remain. It is an important principle for the formation of a union republic.”<sup>103</sup>

For his part, Kammari opposed the idea of elevating all autonomous republics to union republic status, as Lepeshkin and Romashkin discussed. “The principle of dividing

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<sup>100</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 51.

<sup>101</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 54-55.

<sup>102</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 55.

<sup>103</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 54-55.



the republics into ‘autonomous’ and ‘union’ republics remains significant,” he emphasized. “It is unlikely that we could immediately promote all autonomous republics to the status of union republics. At first glance, there is no particular difference among these republics, but their [economic] development shows that difference persists.”<sup>104</sup> He therefore cautioned against using economic development as a criterion for promoting autonomous republics to union republic status, noting that “disputes will immediately emerge about which republic is higher or lower in economic development.” “In other words,” Kammari stressed, “it will lead to unnecessary quarrels and disagreements.”<sup>105</sup>

Hatik Azizyan went further and argued that some autonomous republics should be even downgraded in status due to developments within their population. In this respect, he pointed to declining Adjarian identity within the Adjarian ASSR of Soviet Georgia, a small autonomous republic on the Black Sea coast that gained its status through international agreements with Kemalist Turkey. “If we look at the results of the population census,” Azizyan said, “we will see the following: we have the Autonomous Republic of Adjaria, but now there are only 46 Adjarians.” He noted a recent analysis of the Soviet census by statistician Petr Podiachikh, which noted that “only six people have recorded that they belong to the Adjar nation, nine recorded that they are Svans, and that all the rest consider themselves Georgians.” He concluded that “we must take into consideration such changes in our state structure.”<sup>106</sup> Azizyan also turned his attention to the only two Soviet autonomies that lacked titular nations – the Nakhichevan ASSR and the Nagorno-Karabakh AO within Soviet Azerbaijan. In terms of economic relations, Azizyan stated that

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<sup>104</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 57.

<sup>105</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 58.

<sup>106</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 58-59.

“Karabakh fully and completely refers to Azerbaijan and that is absolutely correct.” However, he argued that “the Nakhichevan Republic, both economically and geographically, gravitates towards Yerevan,” suggesting that it would make more sense to place Nakhichevan under the jurisdiction of Soviet Armenia.<sup>107</sup>

In his remarks, Tsameryan mentioned that there was a need to “further indicate the concrete criteria for the formation of union and autonomous republics and, perhaps, national okrugs.” “It is difficult,” he maintained, “But it appears that one criterion has not yet been mentioned in determining the signs of a union republic, and that is the historical factor.” Although he did not define the idea of the “historical factor,” nevertheless, he argued that “the historical-ethnographic complex should be concretized” and that “it is necessary to bring clarity and lucidity to this issue.”<sup>108</sup> However, Tsameryan disagreed with Zlatopolskii on the idea that a union republic should have external boundaries. “This criterion does not correspond to reality now and will correspond even less to reality in the future,” he said. In this way, he shared Romashkin’s view that the presence of the Warsaw Pact states made the borderland criterion “irrelevant” in many cases and that it would become “even more irrelevant” with the “inevitable” victory of communism over capitalism. Finally, although he agreed with the idea of elevating autonomous republics to

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<sup>107</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 59. In the transcript of the meeting, “Karabakh” is mistakenly written as “Kabardin,” but it is clear from the context which region Azizyan is actually discussing. Significantly, Azizyan was only Soviet figure of Armenian origin known to have raised Armenian national-territorial claims during the constitutional discussions. Outside the USSR, the Armenian Diasporan press hoped that the Armenian cases for Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan would be raised amid the proceedings. These hopes were heightened by the fact that an Armenian (Mikoyan) headed the NPNSC Subcommittee and that it included Armenia’s First Secretary (Zarobyan), as well as input from prominent Soviet Armenian individuals, like Arzumanyan. For examples of Armenian Diasporan perspectives, see “Khmbagrakan. Nergaght yev haykakan hogheru hartse [Editorial: Immigration and the Question of the Armenian Lands]”, *Spiurk* 29 (July 26, 1962): 12, and “Khmbagrakan. Nor sahnadrutyun anhrzheshtutyun [Editorial: The Necessity of a New Constitution]”, *Ararat* 225, no. 6207 (August 5, 1962): 2.

<sup>108</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 60.

the rank of union republics, he thought that it was “impossible to use the principle of the most economically developed republic.” “The further you go, the more the differences [among republics] in economic and cultural development will flatten out,” he said. “The main criterion should be the compactness and size of the population.”<sup>109</sup>

### **Seeking Input at Home and Abroad**

At the July meeting, the legal scholars, most notably Lepeshkin and Zlatopolskii, raised the matter of criticisms of Soviet federalism from “bourgeois” Western observers, especially as it related to the excessive centralization of the 1936 constitution.<sup>110</sup> In response, Mikoyan told his colleagues that “the Institute of Law [of the Soviet Academy of Sciences] needs to collect all the bourgeois criticism of our constitution in relation to questions on nationality policy.” He stressed the necessity of “selecting all statements, without hesitation, without editing, but with annotations,” and to highlight “the brightest places where they criticize us, our weaknesses, without hiding anything, especially criticism hostile to us.”<sup>111</sup> Mikoyan’s call was realized on September 13, 1962 when Romashkin sent him a thorough overview of Western views of the Soviet constitution in the area of nationality policy and state structure, focusing exclusively on criticisms and negative assessments.<sup>112</sup> Romashkin’s report was prepared by V. Tumanov of the Institute of State and Law of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. It commenced by stressing, as Mikoyan had requested, that it “did not include statements [from Western observers] that

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<sup>109</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 60.

<sup>110</sup> As noted earlier, Lepeshkin raised the matter of foreign criticism of the excessive centralization of the 1936 constitution. Zlatopolskii also highlighted foreign criticism when discussing the matter of defining the structure of the Soviet state as a federation.

<sup>111</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 51.

<sup>112</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 64.

recognized the successes of Soviet [nationality] policies and national-state construction.” Instead, it would focus exclusively on “the main theses of reactionary propaganda aimed at discrediting Soviet nationality policy and socialist federalism.”<sup>113</sup>

The report covered everything from broad anti-Soviet propaganda (i.e., that the USSR was a “prison house of nations”) to legal criticism of the Soviet federal system.<sup>114</sup> Understandably, Mikoyan and his associates were most interested in the latter criticism, which focused on the shortcomings of the 1936 constitution and the limits that it imposed on the sovereignty of the union republics. Overall, Tumanov identified five criticisms of Soviet federalism prevalent in Western literature. These criticisms included the arguments (1) that “the Soviet nationality policy was a form of colonialism”; (2) that “Soviet federalism was a fiction, given the centralized nature of the Soviet state and the CPSU”; (3) that the “rights of the union republics were limited and insufficient”; (4) that “Soviet federalism lacks legal guarantees”; and (5) that the “main point of the Soviet federalism was to serve the purposes of external political aims and external propaganda.”<sup>115</sup> The second point of criticism, which characterized Soviet federalism as being effectively a “dead letter” (albeit representative on paper), was considered by Tumanov to be the “leitmotif [i.e., major theme] of criticism of socialist federalism.”<sup>116</sup> He meticulously documented examples of each of these criticisms drawing on various works by authors in the U.S., the U.K., France, and West Germany, and quoting from articles published in

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<sup>113</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 65.

<sup>114</sup> Tumanov’s full report, entitled “Note on Views of the Soviet Nationality Policy and National-State Construction in Bourgeois Literature” (*Spravka ob osveshchenii v burzhuznoi literature sovetskoi natsional’noi politiki i natsional’no-gosudarstvennogo stroitel’sтва*), can be found in RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 65-78.

<sup>115</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 65, 66, 68, 74, and 77.

<sup>116</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 66.

Western journals, such as the *Slavic Review*, *Soviet Studies*, and the *American Journal of Comparative Law*.<sup>117</sup>

The fact that Western authors pointed to excessive centralization in the 1936 constitution as being the cause for the limits on the sovereignty of the union republics was of particular of interest to Mikoyan, who underlined such sections in his copy of the report. One section that he highlighted openly acknowledged that “until 1936, the union republics enjoyed significant rights.”<sup>118</sup> Tumanov noted that “in general, Western literature quite often emphasizes that the 1936 constitution was characterized by the diminution of the rights of the republics when compared with the earlier existing legislation.”<sup>119</sup> Reflecting precisely on the very points discussed in his July 28 discussion with the legal scholars, especially the comments by Lepeshkin, Mikoyan specifically highlighted Western criticisms rooted in Article 14 of the 1936 constitution, which concentrated disproportionate power within the central government.<sup>120</sup>

Mikoyan was also very interested in Western commentary comparing the 1924 constitution with the 1936 constitution on the matter of the guarantee of secession from the union. “Bourgeois authors,” wrote Tumanov in a section of particular interest to Mikoyan, “emphasize in every way that Article 4 of the 1924 Soviet constitution, which guaranteed the right of secession, could be ‘changed, limited or abolished’ only with the consent of ‘all the republics that are part of the USSR’ (Article 6).” By contrast, he wrote that the 1936 constitution “does not include such a guarantee and, therefore, the right to withdraw

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<sup>117</sup> For quotes from articles published in *Soviet Studies* (*Europe-Asia Studies* since 1993), the *American Journal of Comparative Law*, and the *Slavic Review*, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 65 and 67-68.

<sup>118</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 70.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 71.

can be annulled by a simple constitutional amendment.” He further noted that “bourgeois authors contend that this change is no coincidence, and that it expresses a certain consistent line toward the elimination of the legal guarantees of federalism.”<sup>121</sup> In another section highlighted by Mikoyan, Tumanov emphasized that “bourgeois authors also see the absence of legal guarantees for Soviet federalism in the fact that the [1936] constitution does not have in place any procedure by which the Soviet republics could defend their rights in case of a conflict with the federal government.” Tumanov also mentioned Western criticism of the Soviet of Nationalities. However, Western critiques of this chamber focused on notion that, although promising on paper, it lacked true representation in practice, in contrast with the criticisms expressed by Gaidukov and others who argued for its outright abolition. “Bourgeois authors,” noted Tumanov, “are skeptical about the role of the Soviet of Nationalities of the all-Union Supreme Soviet and argue that, in practice, it does not fulfill its intended function of protecting the rights of the union republics.”<sup>122</sup>

In addition to studying Western criticisms of Soviet federalism, Mikoyan and his colleagues, under the leadership of Khrushchev, also examined constitutional models in other countries for comparison as part of the Soviet constitutional reform effort. The Constitutional Commission reviewed the constitutions of both Western states and the Eastern Bloc countries.<sup>123</sup> However, the model that interested Mikoyan and other reformers the most was that of Josip Broz Tito’s non-aligned Socialist Yugoslavia and its 1963 constitutional reforms. This particular federal arrangement seemed to be especially appealing to them, as it brought together a more representative federal system with a more

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<sup>121</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 74.

<sup>122</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 75.

<sup>123</sup> See RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 43, ll. 52-60 and 69-74.

devolved political-economic model.<sup>124</sup> On November 28, 1962, Mikoyan received an extensive 28-page report on the preliminary draft of the new Yugoslav constitution, as prepared by Leonid Ilyichev, who had been appointed by Khrushchev to serve as the head of the Editorial Subcommittee of the Constitutional Commission.<sup>125</sup> In accompanying notes on the Yugoslav constitutional reforms, Mikoyan strongly underlined passages dealing with the nationality issue that mirrored those of the Soviet experience. These included passages on demands from the Yugoslav republics for greater economic autonomy and on the preservation and strengthening of the Yugoslav Council of Nationalities, both of which mirrored Soviet discussions on expanding the rights of the union republics and on preserving the Soviet of Nationalities.<sup>126</sup>

The constitutional reformers also sought the input of the public on the constitutional reform process. From July 1962 and to December 1964, the Constitutional Commission received letters from citizens across the USSR in which they gave their input into the constitutional process.<sup>127</sup> Letters received on matters related to the nationality issue are particularly noteworthy. Some of the letters underscored the historical tension within the USSR regarding its identity and self-perception – was it an ethnic Russian (*russkii*) state, or a more inclusive, multiethnic (*sovetskii*) state? Some members of the public contended that, although it was a multiethnic state, the USSR was, at the end of the day, essentially Russian at its core. Hence, letter-writers from Moscow and Leningrad suggested renaming the country from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to the *Russian* Union of

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<sup>124</sup> Renkama reflects on the “Yugoslav model” and its parallels with the 1961 Party Program (see Renkama, *Ideology and Challenges of Political Liberalisation in the USSR, 1957–1961*, 231-260).

<sup>125</sup> For the full report, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 43, ll. 1-29.

<sup>126</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 43, ll. 65-67

<sup>127</sup> For all reports on the contents of these letters, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, dela 39-42.

Soviet Socialist Republics (RUSSR). One citizen from Leningrad even wrote that “Russia *is* the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”<sup>128</sup>

Others reflected themes familiar to Mikoyan and his associates – such as proposals to elevate autonomous Bashkiria and Tatarstan to the status of union republics. Others went even further and suggested the promotion of not only Bashkiria and Tatarstan to union status, but Dagestan, Udmurtia, Mordovia, Chuvashia, Iakutia, and the Komi Republic as well.<sup>129</sup> One letter writer from Mordovia, proposed renaming the Mordvin ASSR to the more indigenous Moksha-Erzian ASSR, reflecting the native languages of the republic.<sup>130</sup> A citizen from Moscow also floated the idea of creating a separate federative union republic for Siberia – the Siberian SFSR – from the territory of the Russian SFSR.<sup>131</sup> Still others suggested the consolidation of smaller republics into larger federations, including one suggestion to consolidate the three Baltic republics and the Russian SFSR’s Kaliningrad Oblast’ into a single Baltic Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), and the Central Asian republics into a single Turkestan Federation as well.<sup>132</sup>

One anonymous letter received by the committee (described as a “treatise” by Ilyichev in his report), requested that Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan be transferred from the jurisdiction of Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia. The authors of the treatise referred to the administration of these territories by Azerbaijan to be a “historical injustice” that was a “consequence of the personality cult of Stalin and the pernicious activities of Beria and Bagirov.” Notably, Ilyichev’s report on this letter was thickly and heavily

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<sup>128</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 40, ll. 2-3, and RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, l. 98.

<sup>129</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, ll. 21-22.

<sup>130</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, l. 57.

<sup>131</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 40, ll. 123-124.

<sup>132</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, l. 56, and RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 40, l. 45.



underlined by Mikoyan.<sup>133</sup> Nor was it the last appearance of the Karabakh issue among the letters that the commission received. One citizen from Yerevan also requested the transfer of Karabakh to Armenia.<sup>134</sup> In addition, Party member P. G. Ena from Krasnodar recommended that Karabakh be transferred to Armenia, and that the Nakhichevan ASSR be abolished and administered directly by Azerbaijan. In compensation for Azerbaijan's loss of Karabakh, he recommended transferring the Dagestan ASSR to Baku's jurisdiction. Similarly, O. K. Larin of Nukus of the Karakalpak ASSR in Soviet Uzbekistan, advocated upgrading Karabakh, with its Armenian majority, to the status of an autonomous republic, while downgrading majority-Azeri Nakhichevan to the status of an autonomous oblast'.<sup>135</sup>

Another territorial proposal raised by Ena was the transfer of Kaliningrad Oblast' to the Belorussian SSR "as a symbol to the great merits of the Belarussian people before the entire Soviet people in the fight against the German invaders."<sup>136</sup> Both Ena and Larin also proposed unifying North and South Ossetia into a single autonomous republic, either under the jurisdiction of the Russian SFSR or Soviet Georgia, a point that Mikoyan underlined.<sup>137</sup> One of the more outlandish comments came from a citizen who argued that the "division of republics along ethnic lines" was "outdated," a comment next to which a bewildered Mikoyan added an accompanying exclamation point.<sup>138</sup> However, the Soviet leadership did take some of the citizens' letters into consideration. For instance, Mikoyan referred to some of Larin's proposals in his notes of his July 28 meeting with the legal scholars. These proposals included Larin's idea for the elevation of all autonomous oblasts to autonomous

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<sup>134</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 42, ll. 81-82.

<sup>135</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 40, ll. 39 and 41, and RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, l. 87.

<sup>136</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 40, l. 42.

<sup>137</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 40, l. 39, and RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, l. 87.

<sup>138</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 41, l. 31.

republic status and then the abolition of autonomous oblasts as an administrative unit.<sup>139</sup> Mikoyan also noted Larin's proposal to list the Russian SFSR – “the first among equals” – as the first on the list of union republics in the constitution.<sup>140</sup>

### **The Kozlov, Kulatov, and Kunaev Letters**

With the groundwork laid for the constitutional reform, Mikoyan and his constitutional framers in the NPNSC Subcommittee went to work on developing a new framework for the Soviet nationality policy and the Soviet federal system. After Mikoyan's meeting with the legal scholars on July 28, and his review of Western criticisms of Soviet federalism and the Yugoslav constitutional reforms, he prepared for his first meeting with the members of the subcommittee on December 14.<sup>141</sup> In advance of this meeting, he already received proposals for potential recommendations from two subcommittee members – Vasilii Kozlov of Belarus and Turabai Kulatov of Kyrgyzstan – together on November 30.<sup>142</sup> Their recommendations built on the earlier ideas put forth by the legal scholars to Mikoyan and provided a framework for the meeting in December.

In key areas, there was broad agreement between Kozlov and Kulatov. For example, both men took aim at Article 15 of the 1936 constitution, which articulated a limitation on the sovereignty of the union republics. “The new constitution of the USSR should not speak of limiting the sovereignty of the union republics,” maintained Kulatov, who added that “sovereignty cannot be limited by anything.” Instead, he stressed that the article should instead speak of the “voluntary transfer of individual sovereign rights of the

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<sup>139</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 41, and RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, l. 88.

<sup>140</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 42, and RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 39, l. 86.

<sup>141</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 146.

<sup>142</sup> For their proposals, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 79-91.

union republics to the Union.”<sup>143</sup> Kozlov agreed. “The union republics voluntarily transferred part of their sovereign rights to the Union,” he wrote, adding that this fact was articulated in Article 14 of the constitution. Instead, Kozlov offered a revised version of Article 15, highlighted by Mikoyan, which specifically referred to the republics transferring their rights voluntarily to the central Union government.<sup>144</sup> Echoing thoughts earlier raised by David Zlatopolskii, both Kozlov and Kulatov also agreed that there was no need for granting the union republics the right to establish their own military formations. Kozlov dubbed such ideas as “inconsistent with reality,” while Kulatov advocated that the Ministry of Defense, which the 1936 Constitution classified as a “republic-union” ministry, be entirely under the jurisdiction of the union government.<sup>145</sup>

Kozlov and Kulatov also agreed that the formation, or transformation, of national autonomous entities should be left to the authority of the union republics to which they were subordinate. Therefore, Kulatov wrote that “in the new Soviet constitution, when discussing the rights of the union republics, it is necessary to include ‘the approval of the formation of new autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, and national okrugs.’”<sup>146</sup> Similarly, Kozlov wrote that the jurisdiction of the central union government should not include the formation of autonomous entities. “Transferring this question to the union republics in the constitution,” he wrote, “would be fully consistent with the provisions in the Party Program on the further expansion of the rights of the union republics and the consolidation of their sovereignty.”<sup>147</sup> Similarly, he maintained that the listing of

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<sup>143</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 88.

<sup>144</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 83.

<sup>145</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 83 and 91.

<sup>146</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 90.

<sup>147</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 82.

autonomous entities should not be in the all-Union constitution, but rather in the constitutions of their respective union republics, and that mutually agreed territorial changes between republics did not need the blessing of the all-Union Supreme Soviet.<sup>148</sup>

However, Kozlov and Kulatov also had disagreements on certain issues, such as the order of the listing of the union republics. In the 1936 constitution, the republics were listed by the size of their respective populations and Kulatov believed that listing them in this way constituted a “violation of the equality” among them.<sup>149</sup> The idea of changing the order was not new, and it had been raised earlier by Zlatopolskii in Mikoyan’s July meeting with the legal scholars. Specifically, Zlatopolskii proposed two criteria for listing the union republics in the constitution – (1) the date of their entry into the USSR, and (2) the size of the population.<sup>150</sup> Kulatov offered a similar proposal, stressing that “it would be more correct to list the republics either in alphabetical order, or by the date of their entry into the USSR.”<sup>151</sup> By contrast, Kozlov stressed that the order of the listing of the union republics in the constitution needed no change at all.<sup>152</sup>

Kulatov also thought that it necessary for the new constitution to define the legal status of autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, and national okrugs. However, Kozlov felt that there was no need for such a step, arguing that questions of regional administrative-territorial structure within union republics should be confined to the constitutions of those republics and not included in the all-Union constitution. He even went so far as to controversially suggest that all autonomous republics, having “achieved

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 88.

<sup>150</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 52.

<sup>151</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 88.

<sup>152</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 82.

tremendous success in economic and cultural construction,” be downgraded to the status of autonomous oblasts, in a section that was strongly questioned by Mikoyan.<sup>153</sup>

The recommendations of Kozlov and Kulatov also included points that were exclusive to their respective proposals. For example, Kulatov placed great importance on having the new constitution articulate the rights of the union republics. Noting the failure of the 1936 constitution “to present a complete and clear representation of the sovereignty of the union republics,” he held that the new constitution should clearly enumerate these rights in the chapter on the Soviet state structure. Kulatov enumerated several of these rights in his proposal, the first and most important of which was the principle that each republic “forms a voluntary part of the USSR, on an equal footing, and retains the right to freely secede from it.” He also stressed the necessity of legally enshrining the state symbols of the union republics (the flag, coat of arms, anthem, etc.), which he noted had not yet received legal recognition and which were “one of the expressions of sovereignty of these states.”<sup>154</sup> In addition to the articulation of the union republic rights, Kulatov called attention to the varying lengths of terms for representatives of offices accountable to the all-Union Supreme Soviet, such as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the all-Union Prosecutor General. Kulatov instead proposed establishing a universal term length for all positions accountable to the Supreme Soviet, a suggestion that Mikoyan found to be of particular interest.<sup>155</sup>

Kozlov’s proposal included many distinct points, several of which later formed major parts of the subcommittee’s final recommendations presented the Constitutional

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<sup>153</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 84-85.

<sup>154</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 89.

<sup>155</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 90.

Commission in July 1964. The most prominent of these points was Kozlov's proposal for a preamble for the new constitution. Like Kotok, Kozlov envisioned that this preamble would reflect the major changes in Soviet society that had occurred since 1917 and articulate the essence of the state "in accordance with the principles of the construction of the Leninist constitutions of 1918 and 1924." He also provided potential wording for the section dealing with the nationality issue and national construction, underscoring the achievements of the Soviet nationality policy and Soviet support for national liberation and anti-colonialist movements in the Global South.<sup>156</sup>

Like Zlatopolskii, Kozlov also strongly endorsed returning to the wording of the 1924 constitution on the right of the union republics to secession. He stressed that the constitution should allow for an amendment to this right only with the consent of all union republics. Additionally, he strongly endorsed the preservation of the bicameral structure of the Supreme Soviet, and the principle of equality of all Soviet citizens. He further suggested delegating the appointment of the Prosecutors of the Union Republics to their local Supreme Soviets, and not to the all-Union Soviet Prosecutor General.<sup>157</sup> Kozlov also proposed enshrining in the constitution the principle of bilingualism for the union republics, formalizing the use of Russian alongside native languages. He likewise emphasized the importance of the "free development of the languages of the peoples of the USSR."<sup>158</sup> Both of these points would reflect the positions of the 1961 Party Program on the issue of language.

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<sup>156</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 80-81. For more on the connection between Soviet nationality policy and Moscow's appeal to the Global South, see Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>157</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 83-85 and 87.

<sup>158</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 85-86.

After reviewing the proposals of Kozlov and Kulatov, Mikoyan and the subcommittee met on December 14. Those in attendance included only 7 of the 14 subcommittee members.<sup>159</sup> There was no transcript of the meeting but discussion of the proposals for the Constitutional Commission continued even afterwards. Approximately one month later, on January 10, 1963, subcommittee member Dinmukhamed Kunaev of Kazakhstan sent additional feedback to the committee from Alma-Ata. Several of Kunaev's recommendations reflected those of the earlier proposals by Kozlov and Kulatov. Like Kozlov, Kunaev stressed the need for a preamble to the new constitution and that there was no need to "burden the new constitution of the USSR by enumerating the detailed structure of the Soviet state administration."<sup>160</sup> He also echoed Kozlov's position on constitutionally enshrining the position on language as articulated in the 1961 Party Program, emphasizing the use of national languages alongside Russian, "the language of interethnic communication."<sup>161</sup> Additionally, Kunaev expressed opposition to the elevation of autonomous republics to union status, and also cited the pre-existing criteria for elevation as having "no practical meaning" and being "often formal in nature." Specifically, he called attention to the principle of the compactness of the national population, stating that it would no longer apply to his native Kazakhstan, given that ethnic Kazakhs had become only 30% of the population.<sup>162</sup>

Like Kulatov, Kunaev also favored listing the rights of the union republics in the constitution. However, while Kulatov listed the basic rights of the republics, Kunaev went

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<sup>159</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 146. Those in attendance included Kozlov, Kulatov, Ziia Nuriev, Nikolai Organov, Jānis Peive, Sharaf Rashidov, and Vladimir Svetlichnyi. Outside the subcommittee, legal scholars Viktor Chkhikvadze, Petr Romashkin, and Aleksei Orlov also attended the meeting.

<sup>160</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 106 and 108-109.

<sup>161</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 111.

<sup>162</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 106-108.

further and articulated plans for a greater devolution powers from the central government to the republics and for greater economic self-management. Mikoyan found this section of Kunaev's proposal to be of particular interest. Kunaev proposed granting the republics "complete independence in the management of economic and cultural development" within the Union framework and advocated "broad initiative" for union republics in economic affairs. In the same vein, he proposed expanding the rights of the *sovnarkhozes*, an initiative introduced by Khrushchev in 1957 to promote local economic initiative.<sup>163</sup> "Their role should not be limited to coordinating the activities of the *sovnarkhozes* of economic administrative regions," Kunaev wrote. "They should plan and manage them. This move will increase the responsibility of republican *sovnarkhozes* for the economic-financial activities of the *sovnarkhozes* subordinate to them."<sup>164</sup>

In foreign affairs, Kunaev stressed that the union republics could "successfully realize direct cultural ties with socialist countries," in keeping with the aim of the Party Program to "consistently realize the principles of internationalism in the sphere of national relations."<sup>165</sup> He also placed greater emphasis on the importance of the Soviet state in promoting and preserving national cultures "for the further flourishing of the socialist culture of the peoples of the USSR, and for their further mutual enrichment and rapprochement."<sup>166</sup> Mikoyan strongly agreed with both of these positions, as well as Kunaev's proposed provisions to enhance republican representation in union bodies and to

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<sup>163</sup> The *sovnarkhoz* reform ultimately had mixed outcomes. For different evaluations of the reform in the context of Soviet Ukraine, see Nataliya Kibita, "Moscow-Kiev relations and the *Sovnarkhoz* reform," and Valery Vasiliev, "Failings of the *Sovnarkhoz* reform: The Ukrainian experience," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Illic (London: Routledge, 2011), 94-111 and 112-132.

<sup>163</sup> Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme," 9.

<sup>164</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 109 and 110.

<sup>165</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 110.

<sup>166</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 111-112.



oppose “national-racial hostility.”<sup>167</sup> He also favored Kunaev’s proposal for the establishment of inter-republican bodies, which he envisioned would facilitate the cooperation and coordination among the republics in the spheres of economic production, foreign policy, and defense.<sup>168</sup> Hatik Azizyan raised a similar idea to Mikoyan at the July 1962 legal scholars meeting.<sup>169</sup>

### **Mikoyan’s 14 Points**

Kunaev’s letter proved to be the last significant activity of the subcommittee, which suspended its work until February 1964. During that lengthy hiatus, Mikoyan developed a 14-point list of recommendations that the subcommittee would present formally to the Constitutional Commission in mid-July 1964.<sup>170</sup> The 14 points were as follows:

1. In principle, the position on the nationality policy and national-state construction, as articulated in the pre-existing constitution, is generally correct.
2. The new constitution must have a preamble, articulating the essence of the state. It should also summarize developments in the nationality sphere since the 1917 October Revolution and stress the voluntary nature of the union state. The formation of the USSR would be characterized as an expression of the right of nations to self-determination “up to the right of secession,” as formulated by Lenin. For this point, Mikoyan, like Kozlov, also included a preamble draft text.
3. The original wording from 1924 constitution on the right of the republics to secession must be restored in the new constitution. The 1924 constitution stipulated that this article could only be amended with the approval of all union republics. Alternatively, Mikoyan proposed an even more radical option: to prevent the article from being amended at all.
4. The new constitution must emphasize that the union republics exercise their sovereignty through the union state, but in all other respects, they exercise their power independently.
5. The rights of union republics must be articulated in the new constitution. These rights include the right “to call for the convocation of a session of the all-Union Supreme Soviet; to call for a national referendum; to call for a report on the work

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<sup>167</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 113-120.

<sup>168</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 109 and 110.

<sup>169</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 58-59.

<sup>170</sup> For Mikoyan’s original 14 recommendations, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 114-119.

of the highest authorities up to the all-Union Supreme Soviet and the all-Union Council of Ministers; and to challenge decisions made by union (and republic-union) ministries in institutions.”

6. The new constitution must stress that in “areas of activity where the basis of legislation is established by the union government (e.g., education, healthcare, etc.), the government of the union republic also legislates in these spheres.”
7. In the section on the rights of the union republics, the representatives of the republics in union bodies should be articulated.
8. An all-Union Constitutional Court should be established as an arbiter of potential conflicts between the union government and the republics, or among the republics.
9. The new constitution should provide legislative initiative not only to the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet (the Soviet of Nationalities and the Soviet of the Union), but also to “the commissions created by them, the all-Union Council of Ministers, and the Supreme Soviets of the union republics.” Mikoyan also recommended discussing “the question of granting the right of legislative initiative to public organizations on issues affecting their interests as well.”
10. The enumeration of the union republic ministries and the state structure of republican bodies should be not included in the new constitution. Instead, there should be “several fundamental provisions, on the basis of which union and autonomous republics can determine their own state structure apparatus specific to each republic.” Mikoyan added that there should be fundamental provisions “defining the place of national autonomies within the system of Soviet statehood.”
11. State security should be carried out jointly by both union government and the governments of the union republics.
12. Articles 16 and 92 of the 1936 constitution states that the constitutions of union (and autonomous) republic must be structured in “full accordance” with the all-Union Soviet constitution. In the new constitution, the phrase “full accordance” should be revised to simply “accordance” given the specific characteristics of each republic, and the fact that “full accordance” restricts republican rights.
13. Following the advice of Kozlov, the process for the appointment of the Prosecutors of the Union Republics should be changed by having the local Supreme Soviets appoint prosecutors instead of the USSR Prosecutor General.
14. Per the advice of Kulatov, the state symbols of the union republics (the flag, coat of arms, and anthem) should be constitutionally enshrined.<sup>171</sup>

On February 29, 1964, Mikoyan sent copies of his recommendations to all subcommittee members, with the exception of Nikolai Podgornyi who had already left the subcommittee by this time. He also sent his text to Leonid Ilyichev and to legal scholar

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<sup>171</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 114-116.

Viktor Chkhikvadze.<sup>172</sup> On March 3, Mikoyan sent two additional points to the subcommittee, based on Kunaev's remarks. These recommendations were as follows:

1. To add a line to the draft preamble noting the realization of Lenin's position on the "possibility of backward nations and nationalities making the transition to socialism, bypassing the capitalist stage of development."
2. To form inter-republican economic bodies to promote cooperation among republics, "while respecting their sovereignty and equality."<sup>173</sup>

Collectively, the 14 draft points, along with the two additions, comprised a rough portrait of a reformed Soviet state structure that favored greater decentralization for the republics in relation to Moscow. In developing these points, Mikoyan attempted to incorporate all the different perspectives of his constitutional framers, as well as the Soviet legal experts. It was to be the basis for the finalization of the state reform package that he would eventually present to Khrushchev on behalf of the subcommittee at the meeting of the Constitutional Commission on July 16. The response to Mikoyan's draft points varied among his constitutional framers. Uzbekistan's Sharaf Rashidov sent Mikoyan letters of general agreement with all recommendations.<sup>174</sup> Armenia's Yakov Zarobyan, a member of Mikoyan's Armenian network who regularly consulted with him on Armenian affairs, likely communicated his approval to him informally in-person. Six members of the subcommittee – Aleksandr Korneichuk, Jānis Peive, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, Vasilii Kozlov, Ziia Nuriev, and Turabai Kulatov – provided Mikoyan with more specific feedback in letters.

On point #9, Korneichuk advised Mikoyan that the Council of Ministers of the republics be invested with the right of legislative initiative. He also opposed Kunaev's

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<sup>172</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 120.

<sup>173</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 122-123.

<sup>174</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 121 and 124.

proposal on the formation of inter-republican economic bodies on the basis that it “will not do anything good.” He added that “we have great and real opportunities to resolve inter-republican economic questions without creating another bureaucratic apparatus.”<sup>175</sup> Additionally, Korneichuk recommended to Mikoyan the idea of granting union republics the right to conclude economic agreements with foreign states. He also proposed making the Chairmen of the Council of Ministers of the union republics into Deputy Chairmen of the all-Union Council of Ministers.<sup>176</sup>

Peive, of Latvia, underscored the need of the subcommittee to more clearly state the importance of the bicameral structure of the all-Union Supreme Soviet, which “expresses the multinational character of our state” and “guarantees the security of the sovereign rights of the union republics and other national-state formation in the union government.”<sup>177</sup> He also recommended that the “formation of permanent and temporary commissions of the all-Union Supreme Soviet should be implemented on an equal footing from among the deputies of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities.” He stressed that it would be “advisable” to place “at least half of the deputies elected from the autonomous oblasts and national okrugs in the permanent and temporary commissions of the Soviet of Nationalities.” He opposed changing the procedure for appointing republican prosecutors but suggested a clearer delineation between the competencies of the union government and the union republics.<sup>178</sup>

In his feedback to Mikoyan, Kunaev recommended the inclusion of language in the preamble from the Party Program on the “equality of all nations and nationalities with

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<sup>175</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 125.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 127.

<sup>178</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 127-128.

complete consideration of their interests, faster development of those districts of the country that need it, and a just distribution of benefits that grow as part of the process of communist construction among all nations and nationalities.”<sup>179</sup> He also advocated changes to point #5 on the rights of the union republics. Specifically, he argued that there was no need to state that the union republics had the right to call for a report on the work of the all-Union Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers, since both already reported annually to the Supreme Soviet. He suggested that the word “extraordinary” should be added to “session” when discussing the right to call for a convocation of a session of the all-Union Supreme Soviet. Moreover, he noted that the office from which the rights of the republics are granted should be specified, with the right to call for a nationwide referendum granted by the Supreme Soviet, and the right to call for convocation of an extraordinary Supreme Soviet session granted by the Councils of Ministers of the republics.<sup>180</sup>

Regarding point #7 on the representatives of the republics in union bodies, Kunaev recommended retaining the position of the 1936 constitution on Chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the union republics. He maintained that this office should not be elected, but also held that those holding it should likewise be Deputy Chairmen of the Presidium of the all-Union Supreme Soviet.<sup>181</sup> Kunaev opposed the idea of an all-Union Constitutional Court on the grounds that it was unnecessary due to the fact that borders between republics were “losing their former importance.” He also opposed providing legislative initiative to commissions created by the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet,

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<sup>179</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 130.

<sup>180</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 131-132.

<sup>181</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 132.

and he sided with Peive's position on the appointment of republican prosecutors. Moreover, Kunaev recommended to Mikoyan removing the following duties from competence of the union government: (a) the approval of territorial changes between republics and (b) the "formation and abolition of kraiss, oblasts, and raions, and new oblasts and okrugs."<sup>182</sup>

In his feedback to Mikoyan, Kozlov suggested revisions to the preamble draft text, including the addition of the conclusion made by the XXII Party Congress on the formation of a new "Soviet people" and to add the text "and nationalities" after "nations" when speaking of the "achievement of the full equality of nations." In contrast to Kunaev, Kozlov believed that Chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the union republics should be elected, though he agreed with him that these republican chairmen should be considered Deputy Chairmen of the Presidium of the all-Union Supreme Soviet.<sup>183</sup> He said that the position of the Permanent Representatives of the Council of Ministers for the Union Republics at the all-Union Council of Ministers should not be enshrined in the new constitution. Kozlov also opposed the idea of an all-Union Constitutional Court and thought that the all-Union Supreme Soviet would be better tasked with handling disputes among republics. "An order such as this one," he maintained, "will most fully correspond to the principles of Soviet socialist democracy." He also argued that the Supreme Court of the USSR should be granted legislative initiative by the new constitution.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 133-136.

<sup>183</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 137.

<sup>184</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 137-139.

Nuriev noted to Mikoyan that formulation of the preamble should be changed. The draft preamble associated the formation of the USSR with Lenin's principle of the right of self-determination of nations. However, Nuriev argued that "Lenin never reduced the Party's national program to that point alone" and that the preamble should contextualize the formation of the USSR in the implementation of the Soviet nationality policy generally. He further favored listing the union republics in the constitution in alphabetical order and he advocated for increasing representation of national autonomies in the Soviet of Nationalities in order to make the number of representatives equal to the Soviet of the Union. On the secession issue, the far-sighted Nuriev saw potential dangers in the idea of making the secession issue not subject to revision. "At this time, we do not have sufficient experience to make a final resolution on issues related to the development of national statehood in the future," he wrote.<sup>185</sup>

Kulatov provided Mikoyan with extensive feedback on the preamble. Specifically, he advised him that the preamble had to (a) "define the fundamental direction of the development of the Soviet federation and the national statehood of the peoples of the USSR;" (b) "determine the principal differences of the forms of national statehood and the legal status of all national-state formations (SSR, ASSR, AO, national okrug);" (c) "provide for the possibility of the emergence of new forms of federal connections;" and (d) "provide for the advisability of elevating national okrugs to autonomous oblasts." He also advised changing a reference in the preamble to the "economic equality" of nations to the broader "actual equality" of nations, and to add a reference to national okrugs, alongside union republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous oblasts.<sup>186</sup> On point #12, he also

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<sup>185</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 140-142

<sup>186</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 143-144.

recommended adding a note about the phrase “limiting the sovereignty of the union republics” and the removal of the word “limiting,” since, as Kulatov wrote in his earlier letter to Mikoyan, “sovereignty cannot be limited by anyone.” Instead, he proposed adding a reference to the “voluntary transfer of a number of sovereign rights to the union” by the republics. Finally, like Kozlov, Kulatov also favored a reference to the emergence of a “Soviet people.”<sup>187</sup>

Taking these remarks into consideration, Mikoyan sent invitations to the subcommittee on June 3 for its second major meeting on June 9, 1964.<sup>188</sup> The next day, he followed-up by sending to all subcommittee members summaries of their respective recommendations as a foundation for the discussion.<sup>189</sup> The June 9 meeting was attended by most of the subcommittee members.<sup>190</sup> Aleksandr Korneichuk had wanted to attend the meeting but had to decline Mikoyan’s invitation due to health reasons.<sup>191</sup> At the meeting, of which there was no transcript, Mikoyan and his framers developed a final version of their recommendations on the Soviet nationality policy and state structure for the Constitutional Commission. The subcommittee then gave its approval to Mikoyan to send their recommendations to Khrushchev. He did so six days later, on June 15, 1964.<sup>192</sup>

The new list of recommendations was essentially the same as the earlier one that Mikoyan sent out to the committee, with revisions according to the input of the subcommittee members. There were also some important additions. Instead of 14 points,

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<sup>187</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 144-145

<sup>188</sup> For the invitations and the invitation materials, see RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 147-157.

<sup>189</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 158-165.

<sup>190</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 146. Those in attendance included Tursunoi Akhunova, Yakov Zarobyan, Turabai Kulatov, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, Vasilii Mzhavanadze, Ziia Nuriev, Jānis Peive, Sharaf Rashidov, and Vladimir Svetlichnyi. Chkhikvadze and Orlov were also in attendance, as well as a Ukrainian Party official Skoba.

<sup>191</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 173.

<sup>192</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 174.



there were now 17. The first of these new points (point #5) stressed the significance of the bicameral system of the Supreme Soviet and reflected on Nuriev's idea of increasing representation for autonomous entities in the Soviet of Nationalities, making it equal to the Soviet of the Union.<sup>193</sup> The second new point (point #15) stressed the need for re-ordering the listing of the union republics in the new constitution, while the third new point (point #17) called for the preservation of the right for union republics to enter into "direct relations with foreign states," as stressed earlier by Korneichuk and Kunaev.<sup>194</sup>

Additionally, the point on the legislative spheres of the union government and the republics was reworded by Mikoyan and his framers to be much more specific. Instead of simply declaring that both the union and republican governments co-legislate in certain spheres, the new text established union laws as the legal foundation from which republican laws were made, "taking into consideration the specific characteristics of the republics."<sup>195</sup> Further, the idea proposed by Kunaev on the creation of inter-republican cooperative bodies did not find support among the subcommittee, which deemed it "inexpedient," and therefore was not included in the final text.<sup>196</sup> Two days after sending the final text to Khrushchev, Mikoyan sent a letter to Korneichuk, informing him of his recommendations discussed and included in the final list, stressing in particular the addition of point #17 based on Korneichuk's recommendations.<sup>197</sup>

Proceeding from Kulatov's suggestion in his feedback to Mikoyan, the subcommittee also tasked a working group with developing draft articles for the new Soviet

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<sup>193</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 185.

<sup>194</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 188-189.

<sup>195</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 186.

<sup>196</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 191.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

constitution to legally define autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, and national okrugs. This working group consisted of Kulatov, Nuriev, and Chkhikvadze, as well as the *obkom* secretaries of several autonomous republics, including Mikhail Bgzhba of Abkhazia, Abdurakhman Daniialov of Dagestan, Fikriat Tabiev of Tatarstan, Kallibek Kamalov of Karakalpakstan, Bilar Kabaloev of North Ossetia, and Salchak Toka of Tuva.<sup>198</sup> On July 6, Kulatov and Daniialov sent their input on the draft articles to Mikoyan.<sup>199</sup> The final draft articles were submitted to Mikoyan by Nuriev on July 15, the day on which Mikoyan assumed the position of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, i.e., the *de jure* President of the Soviet Union.<sup>200</sup> These articles not only articulated the legal status of autonomous entities in relation to union republics, but also stressed their representation in the Soviet of Nationalities in the all-Union Supreme Soviet.<sup>201</sup> From these final draft articles, Mikoyan struck out a passage stating that an autonomous republic's constitution had to be approved by the union republic.<sup>202</sup>

The day after Mikoyan received the draft articles from Nuriev, he formally presented the recommendations of the subcommittee at a meeting of the Constitutional Commission on July 16. In his speech, Mikoyan began by revisiting Khrushchev's call in his April 1962 speech on the necessity of basing the work on the new constitution on the "great ideological heritage" of Lenin. "Advancing from that point of view," Mikoyan said, "we began to develop the nationality provisions of the constitution, largely focusing on the first constitution."<sup>203</sup> Mikoyan proceeded to put forth the subcommittee's idea for restoring

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<sup>198</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 23.

<sup>199</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 192-202.

<sup>200</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 203-210.

<sup>201</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 209-210.

<sup>202</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 209.

<sup>203</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 211.

the preamble of the 1924 Soviet constitution, outlining the structure of the state. He argued that the lack of such a preamble in the 1936 constitution “politically impoverished” the text. He stressed that the new constitutional reform process presented an opportunity, not only to correct this issue, but also to develop an enhanced preamble, reflecting the developments in Soviet society since the first constitution. “Now the preamble can be very rich, since it will reflect the development of the Soviet system, the socialist republics, the growth of national culture, economy, and the whole society,” Mikoyan said. He added that the subcommittee envisioned that the proposed preamble “should not be long, but at the same time, present precise formulations.”<sup>204</sup>

In his speech to the Constitutional Commission, Mikoyan also discussed the points raised by the legal scholars in his meeting with them, regarding the definition of the Soviet state. However, citing examples of other federal states, Mikoyan again stressed that the USSR was something more than a federation, and that it was in fact a union of sovereign states. “The legal scholars tossed up the idea of defining the union state as a federation,” he said. “We proceed from the fact that there have been many different federal states throughout history, but that the content of each federation is different. They are all known as ‘federations,’ but it is necessary to understand that the essence of each one is different. For example, take the U.S., West Germany, Austria – they are different things.” He noted that the Russian SFSR was also a federation and that “if we speak of our union federation, then it is necessary to indicate all the differences” with other federal states.” Mikoyan argued that it was “no coincidence” that “neither the first nor the second Soviet constitutions use the term ‘federation.’” “We need to have a definition [of the Soviet state]

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<sup>204</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 211-212.

that really fits,” he said. “I do not consider it necessary to analyze the difference, and we see no reason to change the article, which directly says that we are a union state. This definition was established by our revolution.”<sup>205</sup>

Mikoyan also raised the secession issue, stressing the subcommittee’s recommendation to return to the original formulation on the matter as articulated in the 1924 constitution. He also articulated the subcommittee’s position on the issue of the sovereignty of the union republics, exercising sovereignty through union bodies and all other rights through republican bodies. “Especially from the view of foreign policy,” Mikoyan noted, “this formulation would be very beneficial.”<sup>206</sup> Following the newly added point #5, Mikoyan emphasized the importance of the bicameral structure of the Supreme Soviet, and the need to preserve the Soviet of Nationalities. He also presented the subcommittee’s position that the number of deputies in the Soviet of Nationalities should be increased and made equal with the number of deputies in the Soviet of the Union. Given the projected increase of deputies of the Soviet of the Union with the rise of the population, Mikoyan stressed that an increase in the number of deputies of the Soviet of Nationalities was necessary to prevent “an inequality of chambers.” Toward the latter aim, he also put forth the subcommittee’s proposal of permitting votes in the Supreme Soviet to be made by the two chambers separately, rather than as a joint vote.<sup>207</sup> Khrushchev was intrigued by this proposal and, in response, proposed making the number of deputies for both chambers stable, but also to make the number of voters proportionate to the population. “Therefore, whatever the growth, the representation will remain the same,” he maintained.

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<sup>205</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 212-213.

<sup>206</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 213-214.

<sup>207</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 214-215.

“This is something that we need to think about. So, in that way, it will obviously limit the number.” Mikoyan not only agreed with Khrushchev but added that his proposal was “even better” than that of the subcommittee.<sup>208</sup>

Mikoyan proceeded to address the other proposals that were put forth by the subcommittee. He specifically pointed out the necessity of outlining and enhancing the explicit rights of the union republics.<sup>209</sup> He also detailed the subcommittee’s proposal for formally making Chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the union republics Deputy Chairmen of the all-Union Supreme Soviet Presidium. He stressed this idea as “theoretically, practically and politically important” as it would allow the republics to directly take part in the work of the all-Union Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. He deemed the pre-existing system to be “awkward” and “politically wrong.”<sup>210</sup> However, as Mikoyan articulated this proposal and others, Khrushchev alerted him to the fact that he (Mikoyan) was short on time. “I have a question for the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet,” Khrushchev said, cheekily alluding to the new state position of his friend. “Does he obey the general regulations or not?” “He obeys,” responded Mikoyan, “but I didn’t look at my watch.”<sup>211</sup> Mikoyan then summarized the subcommittee’s proposals to create a Constitutional Court, to allow for local selection of prosecutors of the republics, and to establish that state security is provided by both the union and the republic governments jointly. He concluded his report by discussing the subcommittee’s positions on the order of the union republics, the importance of enshrining republican state symbols, and the necessity to drop the term “full” when speaking of the “full accordance” of the republic

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<sup>208</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 215.

<sup>209</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 215-216.

<sup>210</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 217-218.

<sup>211</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, l. 218.

constitutions with the all-Union constitution.<sup>212</sup> Later, in the aftermath of the Constitutional Commission meeting, Mikoyan sent the draft articles defining the legal status of national autonomies to both Khrushchev and Ilyichev.<sup>213</sup>

## Epilogue

The constitutional reform process promised a significant overhaul of the Soviet nationality policy and state structure. However, the dreams of Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and the constitutional reformers for a more representative “socialist democratic” system were ultimately dashed with the ouster of Khrushchev in October 1964. Although Mikoyan had been a staunch supporter of Khrushchev until the very end, Brezhnev decided to retain Mikoyan in his post until forcing him into retirement in December 1965. The ouster of Mikoyan and the Siniavskii–Daniel trial of February 1966 ultimately signaled the end of the Thaw.<sup>214</sup> Although Mikoyan was embittered by this experience, he left office less isolated than his friend Khrushchev and remained in the public eye, often to the annoyance of Brezhnev. He also remained preoccupied with the nationality question. In June 1966, during his Supreme Soviet electoral trip to Yerevan, Mikoyan devoted a significant portion of his speech to the national question. In his speech, he emphasized the same philosophy that he first articulated in 1954, and referred to foreign perceptions of the Soviet nationality policy.<sup>215</sup> Later, in 1972, Mikoyan penned an essay on the national issue that was published

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<sup>212</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 218-219.

<sup>213</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 37, ll. 220-224.

<sup>214</sup> The Siniavskii–Daniel trial of February 1966 involved two writers Andrei Siniavskii and Iuli Daniel who were “tried and sentenced to labor camps for publishing their ‘slanderos’ (anti-Stalinist) writings abroad. The public trial, with its self-conscious evocation of the purge trials of the 1930s, was a neo-Stalinist blast against critically minded members of the intelligentsia.” (Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics & History Since 1917* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 118-119).

<sup>215</sup> RGASPI f. 84, op. 3, d. 50, ll. 50-55. See also A. I. Mikoyan, “Rech’ tov. A. I. Mikoyana” [“Speech of Comrade A. I. Mikoyan”], *Kommunist*, June 5, 1966, 2.

as a booklet in advance of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution.<sup>216</sup> This text also echoed the ideas that he articulated in his 1954 speech.<sup>217</sup>

Meanwhile, the process of developing a new constitution continued, culminating in the adoption of the Soviet constitution of 1977. Significantly, the 1977 constitution included many of the reforms articulated by Mikoyan and the subcommittee, albeit in a watered-down form. Among those ideas that found their way into the constitution were the clear delineation of the rights of the union republics and the right of republican secession from the USSR. Notably, the latter was open to amendment, unlike the version proposed by the subcommittee.<sup>218</sup> However, the 1977 constitution did not signal a dramatic shift in the structure of the Soviet state as envisioned by Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and others in the early 1960s. However, much more significant state reforms, echoing the idealism of the 1960s, would be realized in the constitutional changes in another era – that of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Mikhail Gorbachev’s New Union Treaty of 1991 seemingly promised the realization of a real free union of republics that Mikoyan had discussed with the NPNSC Subcommittee in the 1960s.

Overall, the history of Mikoyan’s role in the 1960s Soviet constitutional reform and the 1961 Party Program demonstrates that the tendency of the Khrushchev government in the early 1960s was toward greater decentralization from Moscow. In Mikoyan’s formulation, the aim of the Soviet government would be the realization of the USSR as a

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<sup>216</sup> Anastas Mikoyan, *USSR: A United Family of Nations*, trans. David Skvirsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972).

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>218</sup> *Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi Zakon) Soiuzu Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik. Priniata na vneocherednoi sed'moi sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR deviatogo sozyva 7 oktiabria 1977 goda* [Constitution (Basic Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Adopted at the Extraordinary Seventh Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Ninth Convocation on October 7, 1977] (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1987), 21-22.

union of sovereign states. Although such promises ultimately went unrealized in the 1960s, they nevertheless underscore Khrushchev's reform efforts as an ambitious and admirable effort to reject Stalinist authoritarianism in favor of a more inclusive and representative model of Soviet socialism.



## Conclusion

How does one manage difference in the multicultural state? In the context of the Thaw-era Soviet Union, Anastas Mikoyan offered an answer, proceeding from the premise that the diversity of the state should be embraced. It was this idea that guided the Khrushchev-era Soviet nationality policy, which Mikoyan first articulated and subsequently played a central role in developing. The policy constituted a rejection of Stalinist state violence and centralization. It was based on the principles of state unity and a respect for ethnic and cultural diversity, ideas that, although not new in the context of historical debates over Soviet nationality policy, were nevertheless given new life by Mikoyan during the Thaw. Under Mikoyan's guidance, Moscow rejected policies that advocated Russification or assimilation in favor of those that promoted ethnic diversity within the framework of the unified state. The Soviet state also rejected mass repression in the nationality sphere by implementing the rehabilitation of national cultural figures and the return of deported nationalities. However, the aim of state unity also led to a political struggle between Moscow and republican elites in pursuit of defining the limits of acceptable national expression. Moreover, the new national policy, as articulated by Mikoyan, had its limits, and did not go unchallenged within the Soviet leadership.

All these different aspects of the Khrushchev-era nationality policy, as guided by Mikoyan, have been explored in detail throughout this dissertation. Chapter 1 argued that Mikoyan articulated its framework in his March 1954 speech in Yerevan, an address that doubled in significance as setting the stage for Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and enabling the process of the mass rehabilitation of political prisoners. The matter of articulation is particularly noteworthy in the historical context of the post-Stalin USSR.

After Stalin's death, Beria and Khrushchev moved to employ a series of reforms aimed at expanding the space for national expression in the context of their competition for the Soviet leadership. Both men sought to use the issue to solidify their respective power bases. However, it was Mikoyan who was the first Soviet politician to articulate a concrete framework toward the post-Stalin nationality policy in his March 1954 Yerevan speech. His expressed approach of waging a dual struggle against both "national chauvinism" and "national nihilism" provided the foundation for the "tug of war" struggle that would characterize Moscow's relations with the republics during the Khrushchev years.

Mikoyan also used the 1954 speech to connect the question of nationality policy reform directly with de-Stalinization in his call for the rehabilitation of the poet Yeghishe Charents. By invoking Charents, Mikoyan tied a greater sensitivity toward national expression with the dismantling of Stalin's personality cult, the rehabilitation of Gulag victims, and the restoration of what he called intra-party "socialist democracy" within the CPSU. It also underscored another important aspect of Khrushchev-era nationality policy – i.e., the rehabilitation of repressed cultural figures. Mikoyan's call for the rehabilitation of Charents helped to enable this process, which eventually came to include the rehabilitation of cultural figures of other nationalities as well.

As Chapter 5 highlighted, Mikoyan proceeded to guide the development of the nationality policy in the 1961 CPSU Party Program and the 1960s constitutional reform effort. As part of his endeavor to break with Stalinism, Khrushchev began to develop a new Party Program, and for that project, Mikoyan's input on the nationality question became essential. Mikoyan's rejection of the *slivanie* concept represented an official defeat for Russification within the CPSU. It also spoke to the reality that, despite the struggle that

developed between Moscow and the republics during the 1950s, the overall orientation of Khrushchev's government was toward greater decentralization for the union republics. However, Mikoyan's struggle within the Soviet leadership to have the *sliianie* concept excised from the Party Program also speaks to the reality that his positions were contested within the Soviet leadership. The reasons for the acceptance of Mikoyan's proposals remain unknown, although both his proximity to Khrushchev and his position as a non-Russian from the Caucasus, with experience in managing difference, offer us potential clues in this regard. Ultimately, Mikoyan's recommendations, as articulated in the drafts of the Party Program, were largely adopted by the Khrushchev government. Enshrined in the nationality platform of the final version published in 1961, they strongly echoed the ideas that Mikoyan articulated in his 1954 Yerevan speech.

Impressed by Mikoyan's arguments and ideas, Khrushchev deferred to him as his chief reformer on the nationality question and appointed him chairman of the NPNSC Subcommittee of his constitutional reform commission. It was through this position that Mikoyan worked with others to reform the Soviet state structure by enhancing the rights of the union republics and autonomous entities at the expense of the central government. Encompassing a variety of views, the subcommittee worked to reverse the centralization of the 1936 Stalin constitution and to return to the spirit and wording of the "Leninist" 1918 Russian SFSR and 1924 Soviet constitutions. In some cases, Mikoyan and his constitutional reformers went even beyond these earlier constitutions. Mikoyan stressed that the USSR was *more* than a federal state, and that it was in fact a union state – a free association of individual republics, more on the order of a confederation. Such a formulation implied a much more devolved Soviet state, with significantly greater self-

governance for the republics in relation to the central government in Moscow. However, Mikoyan did not articulate the specifics of this “union vision” and he left us with more questions than answers. One area that would require particular clarification would be the status of autonomous republics, oblasts, and okrugs. Mikoyan supported enhancing the rights of these entities and gave them much consideration as the NPNSC Subcommittee chairman. However, he did not specify how he could reconcile that support with his vision for a significantly more devolved union, which could potentially threaten the status and rights of those autonomies. Similarly, Mikoyan and his subcommittee did not address the place of non-titular Soviet nationalities in this proposed framework for state reform.

As Chapters 2, 3, and 4 underscored, Mikoyan pursued reforms that reflected the spirit of the post-Stalin nationality policy that he guided. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, Mikoyan invoked his personal experiences as a Bolshevik revolutionary during the Civil War years in order to help guide the development of the post-Stalin nationality policy in the Caucasus. In the context of Armenia, he frequently contrasted the lived experiences of many Armenians of the First Armenian Republic of 1918-20 with the accomplishments and benefits of Soviet Armenia. The lesson that he emphasized was that the First Republic’s dependence on the Western Allies failed to deliver any promised good for the Armenian people. In this context, Mikoyan underscored his identity as both a committed Bolshevik revolutionary and an Armenian patriot. The two, as he saw it, were not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing and constitutive, a decidedly “Apricot socialist” view. Also in the Caucasus context, Mikoyan worked tirelessly to preserve the memory of the 26 Baku commissars and frequently invoked them in his public speeches, especially his comrade and mentor Stepan Shahumyan. By highlighting the historical example of the

Baku 26, Mikoyan's aim was to promote the idea of the Soviet *druzhba narodov*, of ethnic and national coexistence in the pursuit of common revolutionary aims.

As Chapter 3 illustrated, Mikoyan was actively invested in highlighting his native Armenia as a successful model of the Soviet nationality policy to both foreign and domestic audiences. He assisted Armenian leaders on projects big and small, from the Arpa-Sevan canal to the development of Sanahin's village economy, and in the process, fostered a patronage network through his role as an advocate and an advisor for the republic. By eschewing official hierarchies, he became the most senior partner in the project to "build socialism" in Armenia with the aim of projecting it as the model realization of the nationality policy in action. His deferential approach toward Armenian leaders merits our consideration, as it challenges notions of the Soviet Union as an "empire," according to the definition of Burbank and Cooper, in which hierarchies are maintained with the incorporation of new peoples and territories.<sup>1</sup> By blurring the lines of hierarchy in his efforts to highlight Armenia as a model republic, Mikoyan challenges us to rethink our understanding of the Soviet state. His approach toward Yerevan suggests more the model of Adeb Khalid's "mobilizational state," rather than an empire.

As Chapter 4 argued, Mikoyan also followed his philosophy on the nationality question through his actions in the North Caucasus. As with his 1954 speech in Yerevan, Mikoyan tied reform of the nationality policy to de-Stalinization, which in the North Caucasian context, found its expression with the rehabilitation of deported peoples. In working to right the wrongs of Stalinism, Mikoyan's personal experiences again influenced his views on this issue. During his time as governor of the North Caucasus during NEP, it

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 8.

was he who played a key role in establishing the autonomous republics of Chechnya and Ingushetia. Moreover, it was also Mikoyan who opposed the deportation of these nations to Central Asia in 1944, albeit on the basis that it would hurt the international reputation of the USSR. From the time of Stalin's death, Mikoyan actively began to work behind the scenes with Khrushchev to rehabilitate the deported North Caucasian nations, encountering opposition from security officials such as KGB chief Ivan Serov. At the Kremlin in May 1956, he also met with a delegation of Chechen and Ingush representatives requesting the restoration of their autonomous republic and return to their homeland. Mikoyan subsequently led the "Mikoyan commission" to ensure this return and restoration.

However, as Mikoyan, Khrushchev, and other high officials soon discovered, this process was far from easy or clear-cut. The restoration of Checheno-Ingushetia raised new challenges for the Soviet government. Among the most pressing was the delimitation of new borders among the North Caucasus republics, which prompted the rise of new territorial disputes, most notably the protracted East Prigorodnyi issue. Managing tensions between the established Slavic settlers and Chechen and Ingush returnees presented additional challenges, eventually erupting in the 1958 Grozny riots. Added to that mix were the strong national sentiments among the various ethnic communities concerned, which often complicated the work of official Moscow. This Soviet reality once again served as a reminder of the manifold dilemmas of governing such a vast multiethnic state. These conditions favored pragmatic policies over ideological considerations. Moreover, the process of the rehabilitation of repressed nationalities had its limits. While the Khrushchev government favored the return of certain groups (e.g., the Ingush, Balkars, Kalmyks, etc.), others (e.g., the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans) were less fortunate.

The role of Anastas Mikoyan is essential to our understanding of the development of the post-Stalin nationality policy. His reforms and ideas represented a significant departure from Stalinist dictatorship and mass violence. They came to define the nationality policy during the Thaw era and beyond and represented a crucial part of Khrushchev's wide-ranging reform effort to reject Stalinist authoritarianism. At the same time, these ideas did not go unchallenged within the Soviet leadership, with Mikoyan often struggling to have them adopted. Moreover, many of his ideas on nationality policy and state structure reform went ultimately unrealized. These ideas, such as his vision for a decentralized union state, were not only evidently ambitious, but also vague on their specific details, leaving one to ponder how they might have evolved if Khrushchev and Mikoyan had remained in office. Ultimately, the end of the Thaw cut short what might have been a consequential reform effort for the Soviet state, if realized. What is clear is that Mikoyan's favored approach for an "inclusive" model of managing difference has universal significance, beyond Russia and the Soviet Union, recognizing diversity as an asset and an opportunity. It is an approach toward governance from which societies the world over can still learn.



*Figure 1. Anastas Mikoyan delivering his speech in Yerevan for Supreme Soviet elections, March 14, 1962. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*





*Figure 2. In the shadow of Stalin, Mikoyan delivers his speech of March 11, 1954 at the Spenjarov Opera Theatre in Yerevan. In the speech, the Soviet Armenian statesman called for the rehabilitation of Armenian futurist poet Yeghishe Charents, a victim of Stalin's Purges. This frame from footage of the speech is presented courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 3. Mikoyan at a welcoming ceremony with Soviet Armenian leaders in Alaverdi, Lori region, Armenia, March 15, 1962. From left to right: Anton Kochinyan, Anastas Mikoyan, Yakov Zarobyan, and Yeghishe Astsatryan. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 4. Zarobyanyan, Mikoyan, and Kochinyan greeted by admirers at the performance of Khachaturian's Spartacus at the Spendiarov Opera Theatre in Yerevan, March 11, 1962. In his memoirs, Mikoyan contended that it was he who gave Khachaturian the inspiration for the famous ballet. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 5. Mikoyan greeted by youth in Kapan, Syunik region, Armenia, March 13, 1962. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 6. Mikoyan and Kochinyan greeted with traditional offerings of lavash and salt at Karchevan, near Meghri, Syunik region, Armenia, March 13, 1962. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 7. Mikoyan greeted in Yerevan, with Kochinyan and Zarobyan, at the start of his March 1962 visit to Soviet Armenia. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1723, l. 3, Moscow.*



*Figure 8. Mikoyan, with Zarobyan and Kochinyan in Sanahin, Alaverdi, Lori region, Armenia, March 15, 1962. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1723, l. 17, Moscow.*



*Figure 9. Mikoyan, Zarobyan, and Kochinyan greeted by youth at Kapan, March 13, 1962. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 10. Zarobyan and Mikoyan meet with Viktor Hambarzumyan at the Soviet Armenian Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, March 12, 1962. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan*



*Figure 11. Left to right: Marietta Shaginyan, Artem Mikoyan, Marshal Hovhannes (Ivan) Baghramyan, and Anastas Mikoyan, mid-1960s. Courtesy of the personal collection of Vladimir Mikoyan.*



*Figure 12. Mikoyan at the Yerevan Institute of Physics with renowned physicist Artem Alikhanyan, May 23, 1966. Frunze Dovlatyan's film Hello, It's Me!, with Armen Dzhigarkhanyan, was based on Alikhanyan's life and released around the time of this visit. The film was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 1966 Cannes Film Festival. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 13. Zarobyan, Kochinyan, and Armenian youth welcoming Mikoyan to Yerevan with bouquets of flowers, March 1962. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1723, l. 2, Moscow.*



*Figure 14. During all his visits to Armenia, Mikoyan was greeted by capacity crowds, especially in the regions and provincial centers of the republic. In this photograph from Kirovakan (Vanadzor) during Mikoyan's March 1962 visit, the crowd extends for miles to the outskirts of the city (the third largest city in Armenia). Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



*Figure 15. Mikoyan, Kochinyan and Zarobyan greeted by a crowd in Kajaran, Syunik region, Soviet Armenia, March 13, 1962. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*





*Figure 16. The Mikoyan family on vacation in the Crimea, at Mukhalatka north of Berezogovoe, 1956. Left to right: (top row) Alla Mikoyan (nee Kuznetsova), Ashkhen Mikoyan (nee Tumanyan), Stepan Mikoyan, Sergo Mikoyan, Eleonora Mikoyan (nee Lozovskaia), and Anastas Mikoyan, (bottom row) Svetlana and Vladimir Mikoyan (children of Alla and Sergo), and Aleksandr, “Bolshoi” Vladimir, and Ashkhen Mikoyan (children of Eleonora and Stepan), and Olga (daughter of Vano Mikoyan). Courtesy of the personal collection of Vladimir Mikoyan.*



*Figure 17. An emotional Mikoyan with extended family in Sanahin, March 15, 1962. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



Figure 18. Mikoyan and Soviet Armenian government officials in Yerevan. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1723, l. 27, Moscow.

*Figure 19. Mikoyan and son Sergo at the tree planting ceremony during his visit to Sanahin, March 15, 1962. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1723, l. 11, Moscow.*



*Figure 20. Mikoyan with Yakov Zarobyan, Babken Sarkisov, Anton Kochinyan, and Yerevan's Chief Architect Eduard Sarapyan during his March 1962 visit to Armenia. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*

*Figure 21. Mikoyan greeting voters in Yerevan during his March 1962 visit to Armenia. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*





*Figure 22. Mikoyan receiving a flower from a young woman, with Zarobyan in Kirovakan (Vanadzor), March 15, 1962. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1723, l. 21, Moscow.*



*Figure 23. Nikita Khrushchev and the Soviet Armenian leadership at Lake Sevan, May 9, 1961. Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



Figure 24. Eternity: The Final Path of Charents by Regina Ghazaryan, 1996. The work honors Mikoyan's speech of March 11, 1954, in which he called for the rehabilitated of Charents. In the painting, Ghazaryan contrasts the "repressed" year of 1937 with 1954 as a "release," symbolizing the beginning of the Thaw in Armenia. Courtesy of the Yeghishe Charents Memorial Museum, Yerevan.



Figure 25. Letter of the Armenian Composers' Union to Mikoyan, November 1937, in the aftermath of his election as a Supreme Soviet Deputy for Yerevan, and his forced participation in the Purges in Armenia on the orders of Stalin. The second paragraph extols Mikoyan as a "glorious ally of the great Stalin" who "provided tremendous assistance to the Armenian nation" by "exposing" and "defeating" the "vile enemies of the people – Trotskiite, Bukharinite, Dashnak-nationalist spies" on the "Leninist Bolshevik instructions of the wise leader [Stalin]." Ominously, the letter proceeds to praise the NKVD. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 605, ll. 1-2, Moscow.

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Товарищу МИКОЯНУ А.И.

РАПОРТИЧКА

писем граждан, полученных на станциях Алаверды и Санаин

Кто внёс	Содержание	Направление
гр-ка МАЛХАСЯН ам-1029-М	Сообщает, что она работает главным инженером отдела капитального строительства Алавердского медеплавильного комбината. В 1937 году была репрессирована, как член семьи арестованного (у неё был арестован муж). Просит снять с неё судимость. Неоднократно подавала заявления в МГБ, однако ответа до сих пор не имеет.	Президиум Верховного Совета СССР
гр-ка ОВЯН (г.Ереван) ам-1017-О	Сообщает, что её муж Мухсиовян был осужден за денежную растрату на 12 лет тюремного заключения. Просит помиловать мужа.	Президиум Верховного Совета Армянской ССР т. Арушадяну на рассмотрение
гр-ка КОЛОМЯН (жительница ст.Санаин) ам-1031-К	Просит рассмотреть дело её мужа, Коломяна Вартана, который был арестован в 1937 году. Отбыл срок наказания и в 1948г. был вновь арестован. Мужу в настоящее время 73 года, он находится в Красноярском крае.	МВД СССР т. Круглову на рассмотрение
гр-н АБГАРЯН (г.Узунлар, Алавердского района) ам-1032-А	Просит пересмотреть дело его сына, Абгаряна Сандро, который был осужден за растрату 3 тыс.рублей на 3 года.	Прокурору Армянской ССР т. Иоаннисяну на рассмотрение
Семья МАЛЛАКЯН ам-1033-Д	Просит пересмотреть дело отца Матеваса Даллакяна, который был в 1937 году арестован и приговорен к 10 годам лишения свободы, в 1950 году был вновь арестован и выселен в Красноярский край, где находится в настоящее время.	МВД Армянской ССР т. Пискунову на рассмотрение
гр-н ТЕР-АРУТЮНЯН (начальник ст.Кировакан) ам-1034-Т	Просит пересмотреть дело его сына Эльмира Тер-Арутюняна, осужденного в сентябре 1952 г. народным судом Кировакана к 20 годам заключения за участие в убийстве гр-на Маркаряна. По сообщению гр-на Тер-Арутюняна, его сын в этом убийстве не участвовал, а был просто оговорен в милиции.	Прокуратура СССР т. Баранову.

Figure 26. Mikoyan signs off on Armenian rehabilitation cases in his characteristic blue pencil, months after his March 1954 Yerevan speech. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1104, l. 52, Moscow.





*Figure 27. Mikoyan arriving in Baku, with Azerbaijani First Secretary Vali Akhundov in the background, March 25, 1964. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 48, Moscow.*



*Figure 28. Mikoyan at the reception at the Chemists' Palace of Culture in Sumgait, March 28, 1964. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 42, Moscow.*



*Figure 29. Mikoyan meeting workers with Akhundov during his March 1964 trip to Baku. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 6, Moscow.*



*Figure 30. Mikoyan at the 26 Baku Commissars memorial with Soviet Azerbaijani government officials, March 27, 1964. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 38, Moscow.*



*Figure 31. Mikoyan and Soviet Azerbaijani officials during his March 1964 trip to Baku. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 25, Moscow.*

*Figure 32. Mikoyan, with Akhundov, laying a wreath at the 26 Baku Commissars memorial with a ribbon inscribed "To the Fierce Fighters for the Cause of Communism, the 26 Baku Commissars, from Anastas Mikoyan." Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 40, Moscow.*



*Figure 33. Mikoyan at the home of the family of Meshadi Azizbekov during his March 1964 trip to Baku. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1844, l. 69, Moscow.*



*Figures 34 and 35. Anastas Mikoyan – an Armenian hero triumphantly welcomed in Baku, March 1964. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, ll. 52 and 32, Moscow.*



*Figures 36 and 37. An Armenian hero in Azerbaijan. Mikoyan meets with workers during his March 1964 to Baku. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, ll. 43 and 21, Moscow.*



*Figure 38. Mikoyan with Akhundov and Azerbaijani government officials on their way to Oil Rocks via ship, March 27, 1964. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 41, Moscow.*



*Figure 39. Rehabilitated Old Bolsheviks meet with Mikoyan in Baku, March 30, 1964. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 53, Moscow.*



*Figure 40. Mikoyan surveys Sergei Merkurov's monument to the 26 Baku commissars in Baku, March 27, 1964. The monument has since been demolished by the post-Soviet Azerbaijani government of Ilham Aliyev. Courtesy of GARF f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1847, l. 54, Moscow.*



*Figure 41. Mikoyan bids an emotional farewell to Yerevan at the conclusion of his March 1962 trip to Armenia.*

*Courtesy of Avag Harutyunyan of the Kino-Foto-Fono Branch of the Armenian National Archives, Yerevan.*



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<sup>1</sup> Partial Armenian translation of the unpublished manuscript “Anastas Mikoyan. Zhizn’, otdannaia narodu.”

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