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MIKOIAN, STALIN, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER
IN TRANSCAUCASIA, 1919-1922

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The struggle for power in and over Transcaucasia during the first years of Soviet rule exemplifies in numerous ways the basic incompatibility of the forces of national autonomy, if not of independence, with Leninist solutions of the national question. The most famous example is the Georgian crisis of 1922-23 whose outline is well known because of its intimate connection with the developing power struggle around the dying Lenin. However, the broader context of regional Soviet politics within which it emerged and the preceding policy struggles among Bolsheviks regarding the Transcaucasus exerted a no less profound influence on the future yet remain little known. I wish to focus attention on this aspect of Soviet policies and the form it took in 1919-21: an unresolved rivalry between Mikoian and Stalin that pre-saged the later rivalries of local Party leaders with Stalin after 1921.

Prior to the October Revolution socialism, mainly Menshevik, but not exclusively so, found fertile soil in the Transcaucasus. In Baku socialist doctrines and organizations had collided with irreconcilable nationalist forces which mirrored the configuration of the larger region.¹ The entire area, after October, was cut off from direct communication with Petrograd and later Moscow due to the presence of Turkish troops, White armies, and the Georgian Menshevik regime. Only among the Armenians, particularly in Baku, did the Bolsheviks possess cadre, several of whom were dispersed throughout Russia. Many of them knew Stalin from his pre-October activities in the region. In late 1917 he selected two of them, V.A. Avanesov (Avanesian) and V. Terian (later replaced due to ill health by P.N. Makintsian) to

1. Ronald G. Suny, The Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 3-147.

organize an Armenian commissariat in Narkomnats to extend Bolshevik influence among the local and dispersed cadres and to promote the Sovietization of Armenia. The Armenian Bolsheviks were motivated by a violent hatred of the nationalist socialist Dashnaks who had seized power in Erevan. They were convinced that the masses had been trapped into supporting nationalist regimes and that their sacred duty was to agitate for salvation through Communism and Soviet Russia, not independence. It was axiomatic to them that Armenia could not exist independently and must seek Soviet Russian protection.²

Lenin cared more for the chance to win Armenia, now occupied by an anti-Soviet army and regime, back to Petrograd's control than for the local national question per se. Armenia meant for him a pathway for extending the revolution into the Near East. It was a means to an end rather than the ultimate objective coveted by the Armenian Bolsheviks. Terian found that,

At the time of the discussion Lenin was interested in the question of Armenia's self-determination and the exodus of soldiers from Armenia. to assure the security of the Armenians Lenin proposed to leave there the necessary armed forces if they so wished. Terian came out for the unification of Western (Turkish) and Eastern Armenia following which would be their self-determination with a Russian orientation.³

Clearly Terian had grasped the nationalistic aim of resolving Armenia's status while Lenin conceived of it in a wider international context. To further Soviet domestic and foreign policies Lenin saw the removal and disbanding of Russian White troops in Armenia as a boon to the new regime and as a pacific gesture to the Turks. On the other hand Bolshevik leaders

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2. Richard G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia, Volume I: The First Year 1918-1919 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 393-94; G.B. Garibdzhanian, V.I. Lenin i Bol'sheviki Zakavkaz'ia (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1971), p. 226n.
 3. V.A. Borian, Armenia, Mezhdunarodnaia Politika, i SSSR, 2 vols. (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1928-1929), II, 284.

aspired to Sovietize Armenia regardless of others' claims there. The decree of December 24 which formally announced creation of the commissariat also tried to reconcile these two perspectives at one stroke while attaining as much as possible in each direction. The decree called for the evacuation by all troops of Armenia and the formation of an indigenous militia to preserve order. All refugees and emigrants, including those deported by the Turks, could return unhindered. A democratically elected Soviet would constitute the temporary organ of the people's rule. Shaumian, the Commissar Extraordinaire of the Soviet regime in Transcaucasia, would render all aid in repatriation and create local commissions to oversee troop removals under Soviet auspices. Lenin and Stalin concluded by observing that,

"The geographic borders of Turkish Armenia are determined by democratically elected representatives of the Armenian people in agreement with the democratically elected representatives of mixed and disputed districts jointly with the Extraordinary Provisional Commissar for Armenia."⁴

This blueprint for the extension of Soviet rule to Armenia was quite transparent and would have permitted Petrograd unlimited rights to intervene to that end. And the territorial clauses espoused by Terian would have furthered Soviet rule, extending it straight to Turkey's borders. Yet superior Turkish force in lieu of a Red Army emptied the decree of substance to that it remained purely a propagandistic device.⁵ Terian admitted this to the III Congress of All-Russian Soviets in January, 1918. Speaking in reference to Western (Turkish) Armenia he stated,

"The self-determination of Armenia without Armenians had the character of a formal international act and in essence its actual legal significance

4. *ibid.* pp. 259-260.

5. G.P. Makarova, Osushchestvlenie Leninskoi Natsional'noi Politiki v Pervye Gody Sovetskoi Vlasti, 1917-1920gg. (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), p. 37.

was superfluous for the Armenians, but had real meaning for the Turks since the conquered territory-Turkish Armenia had been surrendered to Turkey."⁶

The Armenian Commissariat also devoted itself to the constitution of an integral organization to replace the hated Dashnaks. It set up its own subdepartments and sections for Armenian settlements in the local Soviets of Astrakhan, Saratov, Kharkov, Armavir, Piatigorsk, Tsaritsyn, Rostov on the Don, Baku, and elsewhere.⁷ Despite severe obstacles caused by the lack of cadres and visible communications with Armenia it even managed to dispatch thirty emissaries into Armenia to organize support during 1917-18.⁸ It also organized its own press and began publishing a series of Armenian language Communist newspapers. The rationale for this stemmed from the same source of Narkommats' belated realization that it had to rebut attacks from the anti-Soviet press that sought to discredit the Armenian commissariat. Additionally the press served as an excellent means of recruiting supporters through constant agitation and propaganda.⁹

The subsequent development of this group has been a matter of controversy among Soviet historians. S.A. Tovmassian has charged that the group calling itself the Communist Party of Armenia in 1917-20 had no connection with the present Armenian party formed in 1920.¹⁰ He accuses this group of

6. Borian, pp. 257-259.

7. Kh. A. Barsegian, Istoriia Armianskoi Bol'shevistskoi Periodicheskoi Pechati 1900-1920 (Erevan: Aipetrat, 1958), p. 237. Thus the overriding necessity of making contact with and organizing Armenians where they resided forced this limited but nonetheless significant concession to the principle of extra-territoriality by nationality in organizational policy, hitherto anathema to all Bolsheviks.

8. Istoriia Natsional'nogo-Gosudarstvennogo Stroitel'stva v SSSR 1917-1936 (Moscow: Mysl', 1968), pp. 51-52.

9. Barsegian, p. 238.

10. S.A. Tovmassian, "O Nekotorykh Voprosakh Nauchnogo Osveshchenia Istorii Kommunisticheskoi Partii Armenia", Voprosy Istorii KPSS, No. 6 (1960), pp. 49-64.

separatism and other forms of malfesance. But two years later a group of writers explicitly sought to refute this thesis in Kommunist. If one can follow the bewildering course of actual events (or what purports to be that course based on necessarily self-serving Soviet sources) it appears that they are correct and Tovmassian in error. The relevance of the issue for us is that the group calling itself the Communist Party of Armenia in 1917-20 was the directing elite of the Armenian Commissariat.¹¹ Thus their party successes or failures paralleled those of the Armenian commissariat or Narkomnats as a whole.

At the time of the formation of the Armenian commissariat in the capital other members of existing Armenian Bolshevik organizations formed a Party counterpart to it in the aforementioned CP of Armenia. At the Tiflis conference of the overall Bolshevik Transcaucasian Kraikom in October, 1917, Borian proposed to Communists from Western (Turkish) Armenia that they organize party and conduct a struggle against the "adventurism" of the Dashnaksutium Party that was coming to power. The conferees soon adopted this and dispatched G. Aikuni to Moscow to represent them there. In Moscow he quickly aligned himself with the leaders of the Armenian Commissariat, Avanesov and Terian (and probably also with Stalin), soon obtaining the CC's sanction for his group as the official Bolshevik representatives in Armenia.

Until adoption of the Brest treaty this group and the commissariat were active in agit-prop work and party organization in Armenia. But its bases of action were Tiflis and especially Moscow, not Erevan though

11. G. Obychin, G. Shanshiev, L. Shaumian, "Nekotorye Voprosy Istorii Kommunisticheskoi Partii Armenii," Kommunist, No. 6 (1962), pp. 78-86, particularly pp. 81-82.

scattered groups were active in the underground. But the treaty and subsequent Turkish and other incursions into Armenia, along with the disturbances of civil war destroyed the local centers which then decamped to Moscow and various other political jobs.¹² Since the local party's center was in Moscow and the Kavkraikom, its nominal superior, in Vladikavkaz, during 1918-19 the party reached its nadir. Local organs were scattered, small, lacking a guiding center, suffering from poor communications with Moscow and among themselves. Consequently its leadership was very poor.¹³ The work of the Armenian Party was restricted, therefore, to a very limited scope of action.¹⁴ Consequently both the commissariat and the Communist Party of Armenia became, as did others, extra-territorial organizations of Armenians thus contradicting established Party principles. But no other path was open to the Bolsheviks if they wished to Sovietize a nucleus of Armenians. Thus the process of Sovietization became, as elsewhere, an imported one.

The commissariat's disarray and limited freedom manifested themselves in its November, 1918 report. The report admitted the near paralysis of its actions due to its severance from local ties. Its work touched only a few comrades. Except for the hazards connected to sending agents and agitators into the Caucasus,

12. *ibid.*

13. S. Kh. Karapetian, Kommunisticheskaia Partia v Bor'be za Pobedu Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii v Armenii (Erevan: Aipetrat, 1959), p. 171.

14. Kh. A. Barsegian, "Istoriia Armianskoi Bol'shevistskoi Periodicheskoi Pechati 1900-1920," Tbilisi, Avtoreferat Kandidatskoi Dissertatsii, 1961, pp. 55-56.

mass agitation did not exist. At the same time it was colliding with bourgeois national organizations in Russia and Armenia.¹⁵

Despite this metamorphosis into an extra-territorial agency the party and commissariat remained, during 1918-19, like other Bolshevik organizations, anti-nationalists. Stalin and his acolytes here burned with hatred towards nationalist elements in Transcaucasia and seized every possible opportunity to obstruct a rapprochement with the Dashnaks. They believed that the Armenian masses were ignorant of Marxism and lay under the claws of nationalism. They encountered numerous obstacles in seeking to re-educate their people to a Marxist internationalist mentality, spread Marxism, and organize to "save" Armenia.¹⁶

Another difficulty lay in the breakdown of ties between Moscow and the field which led to the demoralization of some cadres and to adventurism or opportunism of others, cardinal Communist sins.¹⁷ Meanwhile an important aim of the commissariat was to take over all non-Communist Armenian organizations. It felt that all these agencies were either nationalist or connected with the Armenian Republic and/or the National Council in Tiflis. It requested the Sovnarkom to liquidate them and Bolshevize them as a major blow to the Dashnaks in Erevan and to the bourgeois nationalism which they saw as the mainstay of its popular support.¹⁸ On July 17, 1918 the Sovnarkom

15. Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia Sotsialisticheskaia Revoliutsiia i Pobeda Sovetskoi Vlasti v Armenii: Sbornik Dokumentov (Erevan: Aipetrat, 1957), pp. 242-249.

16. Richard G. Hovannisian, The Republic of Armenia, Volume I: The First Year, 1918-1919 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 393-394.

17. *ibid.*

18. *ibid.* pp. 396-397.

decreed the liquidation of these organizations and the consignment of their assets either to the Armenian Commissariat or to the local Soviets where no commissariat existed. Thereafter many Armenian schools were either closed or Sovietized. Nevertheless the commissariat remained dissatisfied with the slow pace of liquidation and the tenacity of nationalism in organizations that still operated clandestinely.

"Remonstrating with the Sovnarkom and the regional Soviets, Stalin's assistants repeatedly "exposed" the true counter-revolutionary nature of all non-Bolshevik Armenian groups without exception. The zeal of the Commissariat of Nationalities was not shared, however, by many of the local officials who evaded forceful action."¹⁹

The extra-territorial nature and pretensions of the Armenian party coupled with its inability to direct Armenian events aroused the enmity of both local Communists in Armenia who'd had to become organizationally self-sufficient; and Communists such as Mikoian and the Kavkraikom who distrusted extra-territoriality for both organizational and national reasons. The former group resented what it felt to be the undeserved status of Aikuni's faction. The latter feared the modification of its prior policies and the turn to a nationalist deviation even if only potentially.²⁰ However through 1919 until the summer the CPA enjoyed Moscow's favor. Its delegates attended the first Comintern congress. Moreover,

"The CC RKP(B) considered the formal existence of an independent Communist Party of Armenia to be necessary. The CC RKP(B) cooperated in adjusting the organizational activity of the CC KPA, whose cooperation was reinforced by authoritative Armenian Communists, members of the RKP at that time, in Party and Soviet work."²¹

Until then the Kavkraikom had been uniformly internationalist in outlook.

19. *ibid.* p. 411.

20. *ibid.* p. 413.

21. *ibid.* p. 411.

Both Mikoian and Makharadze testified to its hostility even to the idea of regional self-determination, let alone any idea of "independent" or self-determined national entities in the region.²² Therefore the Kavkraikom deeply suspected Aikuni's faction to the extent of repeatedly seeking CC curtailment of its activities on the grounds that it ignored Kavkraikom directives.²³

In Azerbaidzhan too 1918 was an ignominious year for Bolshevism due to the collapse of the Baku commune because of its inability to overcome the poisoned Armenian-Azeri relationship. Moscow's advice was again of little use since it was based on the platitude of striving for the class unity of each people against their own bourgeoisie.²⁴ On the other hand Moscow demanded the unswerving loyalty of all Bolsheviks to its authority in peremptory fashion; Stalin again being the spokesman in a particularly blunt example.²⁵

Locally Bolshevism's situation was as confused there as it was everywhere else. Moslem Bolsheviks of the Adalet and Hummet Parties recognized that Baku and Azerbaidzhan had to be more closely tied and that they must pay more attention to local socio-political factors. But they split over

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22. K. Ivanidze, Slavnye Stranitsy Bor'by i Pobed (Tbilisi: Meranii, 1975), p. 247 and Mikoian's memoirs in Bakinskii Rabochii, November 26, 1967 cited in A.Sh. Mil'man, Azerbaidzhanskaia SSR-Suverennoe Gosudarstvo v Sostave SSSR (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe Gosudarstvo, 1971), pp. 20-21.
 23. Barsegian, p. 57.
 24. G. Khachapuridze, Bol'sheviki Gruzii v Bor'be za Pobedu Sovetskoii Vlasti, Vtoroe Izdanie (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1951), p. 162.
 25. Iz Istorii Bor'by Kommunisticheskoi Azerbaidzhana za Pobedu Sovetskoii Vlasti (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1958) p. 309.

Azerbaidzhan's national future.²⁶ Buniat Zade recalls that Lenin had to resolve the issue in 1918-19.

"When we reported to Il'ich that two trends existed in Azerbaidzhan the first that with the liberation of Baku and Azerbaidzhan it was necessary to create an independent Socialist Soviet republic, the second that no republic was needed but it was necessary to divide Azerbaidzhan into Gubernias and unify them to the RSFSR, Il'ich directly said that the first opinion on creating an independent republic was correct and the second a colonialist and even stupid one."²⁷

This statement could hardly resolve the content of such independence since Azerbaidzhan was unattainable then. But the juxtaposition of an independent Soviet Azerbaidzhan to a rival center in Tatarstan was probably not displeasing to the leadership. This point was brought home by the Azerbaidzhani opposition to the autonomist organizational schemes of Sultangaliev propounded at the First Conference of Communist Organizations of the East in 1918. Their spokesman, E. Sardarov, denied any need for organizational autonomy and was duly appointed to Narkomnats and the Musburo.²⁸ In January, 1919 a Commissariat of Transcaucasian Moslems duly came into being led by prominent indigenous Moslems: N. Narimanov, S.M. Effendiev, Sultanov, Musabekov, Buniat Zade, et al.²⁹ The task of the Astrakhan Department (its operating center) was to prepare, by way of agitation and publications in the native tongues, the diffusion of Bolshevism and Azerbaidzhan's liberation.³⁰ These men were both more observant and flexible in their work

26. *ibid.* pp. 311, 315.

27. G.E. Garibdzhanian, V.I. Lenin i Bol'sheviki Zakavkaz'ia (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1971), p. 273.

28. Bor'ba za Pobedu Sovetskoii Vlasti v Azerbaidzhane, 1918-1920, Dokumenty i Materialy (Baku: Izdatel'stvo AN Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1967), pp. 22, 27 and Dzh. B. Guliev, "Kommunisty Azerbaidzhanstsy v Sovetskoii Rossii 1918-1920gg." Trudy Instituta Istorii Partii TBK KP Azerbaidzhana XXIX, (Baku, 1968), p. 33.

29. Bor'ba za Pobedu Sovetskoii Vlasti v Azerbaidzhane, pp. 56-57.

30. M. Kaziev, Nariman Narimanov: Zhizn' i Deiatel'nost' (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe Gosudarstvennoe-Izdatel'stvo, 1970), p. 101.

than others had been in similar positions. The experience of Baku had chastened them and they were more ready to adapt tactics, if not strategy, to local reactions as Buniat Zade's March, 1919 resolution illustrates. This directed all forces to organize the local Moslem proletariat and to transfer power from temporary committees to organizational plenipotentiaries of Soviet deputies. Secondly, due to the non-occurrence of a spiritual revolution among Moslems (i.e. observance of the decree separating Church, state, and school) party workers were cautioned to proceed carefully and not to inflame Moslem feeling. Thirdly, it was necessary to arrange for more agitators to organize the Moslem proletariat.³¹

Nevertheless these local formations also reached an impasse by spring, 1919. As they had regenerated defunct chapters they ran up against the national question. To those active locally, particularly in Baku, it became clear that the only path to popular support was by a gesture towards national sentiment. The Kavkraikom, the next higher party organ, remained adamantly opposed to national concessions. Moscow too seemed disposed to follow that line. It recognized Aikuni's faction and had no policy for Azerbaidzhan. But Mikoian and his fellow Azerbaidzhanian activists stepped adroitly into this void with a policy initiative that succeeded totally, even overcoming Stalin's objections.

His first step was to secure the unanimous opinion of his comrades in the Baku City Committee. They voted to change the local party's slogan from "A Soviet Caucasus" to "A Soviet Azerbaidzhan". This outraged the Kavkraikom which saw it as a concession to nationalism. When Mikoian, in

31. *ibid.* p. 103.

May, obtained his colleagues' assent to call for a single Azerbaidzhani CP they grew still angrier. Baku was guilty of precisely that which they had accused the Georgian Mensheviks of doing. Moreover, a separate and unified party, rather than diverse Moslem organizations of Hummet and Adalet, would inevitably prove to be a point of resistance to the Georgian-dominated Kavkraikom.³²

But Mikoian's vision outran mere organizational and agit-prop adjustments. It embraced all Soviet policy in the Transcaucasus. Once he had united the Baku center he moved on to the next step; persuading Kirov and Ordzhonikidze (in Astrakhan) that only his plan could ensure a Communist victory. Actually the Kavkraikom erred in seeing his moves as decentralizing. They were profoundly centralistic and posited the dependence of local Communists on Moscow and the Red Army as the necessary condition of victory. Mikoian's efforts coincided with those of the members of the Transcaucasian Commissariat in Astrakhan at this time to persuade Kirov to reckon with local conditions regarding work in Azerbaidzhan.³³ Simultaneously the overall drift towards centralization found expression in Narkomnats' order to unite all the national commissariats in Astrakhan, including the Transcaucasian one, in the local Gubispolkom.³⁴ By May, 1919 at the conference of local organizations chaired by Ordzhonikidze at Baku, it was up to Mikoian and his allies to link their supposed nationalism with accelerating centralist proclivities as the fastest road to Soviet power. The earlier city-wide

32. Hovanissian, pp. 401-402.

33. E.A. Tokarzhevskii, Iz Istorii Inostrannoï Interventsii i Grazhdanskoi Voiny v Azerbaidzhane (Baku: Izdatel'stvo AN Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1957), p. 209.

34. Dzh. B. Guliev, Bor'ba Kommunisticheskoi Partii za Osushchestvlenie Leninskoi Natsional'noi Politiki v Azerbaidzhane (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1970), p. 367.

conference had adopted his slogan of an independent Soviet Azerbaidzhan on May 2. On May 7-8 a conference of local party organizations rejected the idea and its justifications. However at the conference chaired by Ordzhonikidze on May 28-29 the latter's pressure sufficed to change the Kavkraikom's mind and to induce it to support this slogan.³⁵ On June 2-3 Kirov forwarded to Lenin a complete report for consideration by Moscow agencies.³⁶ He indicated that the question had split Bolsheviks there but that Ordzhonikidze's argument that voluntary union with Soviet Russia in military and economic affairs would follow its realization had quieted opposition.³⁷ Mikoian, however, had scored by writing Lenin on May 22 about his concern for the lack of Moslim cadre. He observed that the Azeris held back from the Party fearing Russian domination. The slogan of an independent Azerbaidzhan would alleviate this fear and notwithstanding Tiflis' objections, the Baku comrades would not retreat from this.³⁸ He also revealed his centralizing bent by recommending direct ties between the Baku organization and the CC bypassing the Kavkraikom in Tiflis. He announced plans for an armed insurrection aided by the Red Army and Fleet. He requested literature and cadres in the native languages.³⁹ He explicitly linked success there to the

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35. A.Z. Begian, Lenin i Sovetskaia Natsional'naia Gosudarstvennost' (Erevan: Aiastan, 1974), p. 72; A.G. Titov, "Bor'ba Kommunisticheskoi Partii s Uklonami v Oblasti Natsional'nogo Voprosa v Perekhodnom Periode ot Kapitalizma k Sotsializmu v SSSR"--Iz Istorii Partiinykh Organizatsii Verkhnego Povol'zhia, Chast' Pervaia, Iaroslavl, 1966, p. 71; Velikii Oktiabr' i Natsional'nyi Vopros (Erevan: Izdatel'stvo AN Armianskoi SSR, 1977), p. 143.
36. ibid.: S.V. Kharmandarian, Lenin i Stanovlenie Zakavkazskoi Federatsii 1921-1923 (Erevan: Aiastan, 1969), pp. 29-31; A.N. Mnatsakanian, Poslantsy Sovetskoii Rossii v Armenii (Erevan: Aipetrat, 1958), p. 39.
37. Velikii Oktiabr' i Natsional'nyi Vopros, p. 143.
38. Hovanissian, p. 402n.
39. A.I. Mikoian, "Vospominanii," Iunost' No. 1 (1969), pp. 88-90; Garibdzhanian, V.I. Lenin i Bol'sheviki Zakavkaz'ia, p. 274.

advance of the Red Army. Since Kirov had assured Lenin that independent Azerbaidzhan would voluntarily merge with the RSFSR, through the medium of a single Transcaucasian Republic in phases after conquest, thus safeguarding state unity, Lenin approved the plan.⁴⁰

Mikoian's letter and the actions by Ordzhonikidze and Kirov had placed the question of policy in Azerbaidzhan and the Transcaucassus as a whole squarely before the supreme state and Party agencies for consideration. Mikoian had secured the agreement of the Baku Gorkom, Kirov, and Ordzhonikidze against the Kavkraikom. Lenin, upon receiving Kirov's and Mikoian's information, had sent for Narimanov to report on local conditions. His impressive report satisfied Lenin who had the Orgburo and Politburo approve in principle the idea of an "Independent Soviet Azerbaidzhan" and promoted Narimanov to Narkomindel's Near Eastern desk.⁴¹ But Stalin's obstructions delayed the consolidation by Mikoian of his victory for six more months.

Stalin's objections were typically covert and manifested themselves in obstructions of policy implementation by dilatory tactics. Mikoian wrote that,

"Stalin twice received from the CC the assignment of giving a conclusion in the case of my proposals on the unification of the then existing parallel organizations to the RKP in Azerbaidzhan, "Hummet" and "Adalet" into a single Communist Party of Azerbaidzhan entering into the structure of the RKP, and similarly on converting the independent Azerbaidzhan bourgeois republic into a Soviet republic closely tied with Soviet Russia. Both times Stalin somehow managed to evade fulfillment of these charges of the CC and thus delayed the examination and implementation of the CC decision on the questions raised by me."⁴²

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40. Velikii Oktiabr' i Natsional'nyi Vopros, p. 144; G.B. Garibdzhanian, Kommunisticheskie Organizatsii Armenii v Bor'be za Pobedu Sovetskoi Vlasti (Erevan: Armianskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1957), p. 197.
41. Hovanissian, p. 402; Tokarzhevskii, p. 280; G.B. Garibdzhanian, V.I. Lenin Bol'shevistskie Organizatsii Zakavkaz'ia (1893-1924) (Erevan: Izdatel'stvo AN Armianskoi SSR, 1967), p. 397.
42. A.I. Mikoian, "Vospominanii," Novyi Mir, No. 11 (1972), p. 189.

Typically Soviet literature is silent about Stalin's motives and specific policy objections. However he later admitted that he had opposed an independent Azerbaidzhan and implied that in any case it had only a pro forma meaning. This speech was in late 1920.

"In this speech Stalin declared openly that he had been against the independence of Soviet Azerbaidzhan and that the only reason for the Party's agreement to the proclaiming of Soviet Azerbaidzhan was the fear that the local bourgeoisie and national intelligentsia would accuse Soviet Russia of seizing and occupying Azerbaidzhan. Stalin further stated, "In order to tear this weapon out of the hands of the intelligentsia we had to say that Azerbaidzhan was an independent country --- Such formal independence was a question of political strategy." He further demanded that the Russian language be introduced side by side with the Azerbaidzhani since "you are a part of the federation."⁴³

Undoubtedly Stalin had come to regard the region as his special preserve and resented having to listen to an upstart from Shaumian's camp which had previously opposed him. Moreover Mikoian aimed, by his own testimony, to unseat Stalin's Armenian faction and to submerge them within a larger Armenian Party. He had also won over Stalin's trusted seconds, Kirov and Ordzhonikidze, to his plans. Stalin's self-proclaimed ambition to be seen as liberator of Asia Minor and the Transcaucasus, his desire for vengeance upon the Transcaucasian Mensheviks and nationalists, his hunger for a Podvig had been thwarted, or so it seemed, due to outside intervention. Consequently he reacted as he had when he'd encountered opposition in Narkomnats--by retreating into sullen obstruction.⁴⁴

In return for the slogan of independence the Moslem Communists of Azerbaidzhan had to accept, according to Mikoian, a real diminution of

43. M.I. Kulichenko, Bor'ba Kommunisticheskoi Partii za Reshenie Natsional'nogo Voprosa v 1918-1920 Godakh (Kharkov: Izdatel'stvo Kharkovskogo Universiteta, 1963), p. 440.

44. Admittedly this is speculative but it fits well with Stalin's otherwise incomprehensible repeated defiance of Lenin's directives in Transcaucasia.

their remaining organizational autonomy. Hummet-the native party- and Adalet-the party of emigrant Iranian workers-had to amalgamate. By 1919 the process of monitoring of these parties was well advanced. Guliev has written that the Adalet Party in Baku was closely tied to the RKP Gorkom, that the two parties functioned as one, and that they both acted under the direction of the Kavkraikom (at least excepting Mikoian's initiative) which regularly discussed the forms and methods of their work.⁴⁵

In July, 1919 the central Party leadership decided to recognize Hummet as the independent CP of Azerbaidzhan with the rights of an Obkom. Possibly S.M. Effendiev's arguments influenced this decision. He contended that since the regime now tended to compromise tactically in order to attract native support; it should also act accordingly to attract support from Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaidzhan.⁴⁶ But for Mikoian even the previous limited freedom those parties had enjoyed was too much. He reacted by claiming that,

"How could they offer to unite in Hummet by religious affiliation all Moslems of different nationalities and then not only of Russia, but even of foreign countries of the East? After long arguments and discussions we finally came to a common opinion. All Communists of Azerbaidzhan, independently of their nationality, must enter a single Communist Party."⁴⁷

He reported these conclusions to Lenin in September also claiming the opposition of all local cadres to organizational independence.⁴⁸

45. Dzh. B. Guliev, Trudy Instituta Istorii Partii pri TsK KP Azerbaidzhana (Baku, 1967), p. 36.

46. Zhizn' Natsional'nostei, No. 28 (36) (July 27, 1919), p. 1.

47. Mikoian, Iunost' No. 4 (1969), pp. 77-78.

48. A.I. Mikoian, Dorogoi Bor'by (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literaturny, 1971), pp. 541-542, idem. Mysli i Vospominaniia o Lenine (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literaturny, 1970), p. 37.

He had also been active in Armenian affairs seeking to win primacy for his views and to unseat both the Aikuni faction and the Kavkraikom for its wrong nationality policies. The process he adopted demonstrated the fundamentally centralist essence of his outlook. Throughout the summer of 1919 the Kavkraikom had been the conduit for several Party workers infiltrated into Armenia to repair the shattered local apparatus.⁴⁹ These workers were not from Aikuni's faction and may even have opposed it. Mikoian claimed that they had no idea of the existence of Aikuni's group until the fall of 1919 when the latter faction proclaimed itself the leading Armenian party organization, bypassing the Kavkraikom, sending its own candidates to leadership positions, etc. The local Communists refused to work with them and set up their own Armrevkom as an Obkom under Kavkraikom leadership. Mikoian's Baku organization advocated a single party in Armenia but refused to acknowledge Aikuni since he had no local ties.⁵⁰ The September, 1919 conference in Erevan of the Armrevkom was thus the work of the Armrevkom was the work of the Kavkraikom and ended in a preliminary compromise unifying all locally present groups.⁵¹ But the situation reached an impasse again, stemming from the clash of the local factions and the Kavkraikom's paradoxical position. Around this time Mikoian came to Moscow to report back to Lenin et al. on local affairs and to obtain policy directives. Thus again he won access to the top; screening out all rival influences except Stalin's which he defeated decisively. He was free to recommend his

49. Garibdzhanian, Kommunisticheskie Organizatsii, pp. 180-181; Karapetian, p. 171.

50. Mikoian, "Vospominanii", Iunost' No. 4 (1969), pp. 77-78.

51. O. Bagdassarian, Bor'ba za Edinstvo KPSS 1920-1930 (Erevan: Aipetrat, 1964), p. 54.

own course for the reorganization of the entire Transcaucasian apparatus.⁵²

This occurred in November, 1919. At the November 14 Politburo session Avanesov, an Aikuni partisan, represented Narkomnats. The Politburo considered subordinating all the contending parties to the Kavkraikom while preserving their independence. Kamenev asserted that Stalin's counter draft had not been heard yet. But Lenin declared support for Mikoian and submitted a detailed resolution for future consideration.⁵³ Avanesov and Aikuni in their drafts protested the Kavkraikom's interference in their internal affairs but Mikoian rebuffed them.⁵⁴ By December he had become a new star in the Bolsheviki firmament, an expert in this area, and the victor over Stalin and his creatures in Armenia. By that time he appeared as a spokesman in his own right on the Transcaucasian nationality problem. He attacked "adventurists" and "know nothings" who had risen to prominence due to the lack of a single Party agency that enforced links with local Bolsheviki in the field, the front, and Moscow. Mikoian repeatedly insisted on the need for such organization that would give binding directives in the Caucasus as the only way of establishing a unified line of action.⁵⁵ In this endeavor he was totally successful. Over Stalin's opposition the Congress of Soviets ratified the decision to subordinate the Armenian Party to the RKP Kavkraikom. Additionally as Mikoian wrote in 1925,

"As is well known the Politburo of the Central Committee in December, 1919 not only decided for our point of view on the question of the organization of the Azerbaidzhani Communist Party, but despite the opinion of all our Trans-Caucasian organizations, directed the Party in Georgia and Armenia also to organize similarly, with the decision

52. Mikoian, Mysli i Vospominanii o Lenine, p. 38.

53. *ibid.* p. 77.

54. Obychin, Shanshiev, Shaumian, pp. 83-93.

55. Vos'maia Konferentsiia RKP (B) Protokoly (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1961), pp. 38-39, 145.

to unify us on an All-Caucasian scale in a single organization under the leadership of the Party Kraikom."⁵⁶

This was the genesis of the Kavburo whose formal charter was published on January 3, 1920. And its functions were precisely those Mikoian had demanded so that it could serve as the directing and radial center of Bolshevik activity.⁵⁷ The resolution frankly admitted tactical considerations of overcoming hostile propaganda and winning over Eastern nationalist sentiment to be the motives behind establishing "independent republics".⁵⁸ But the organizing of the Kavburo following soon after prompted an actual move towards increasing Moscow's guidance over the local political process. Thus the reconstituted Armenian Party decided that when the Red Army and other republics' Sovietization converged upon them they would implement "independence" but not before.⁵⁹

This January resolution and the preceding discussions had been a great shock to the Kavkraikom and everyone else, indicating the fact that such independence was purely tactical and designed to counter charges of Soviet colonialism. Additionally the resolution creating the Kavburo explicitly linked its activities to the Sovietization of Turkey and Iran.

All energies were supposedly to be directed towards these ends. Local parties supported the goal of Sovietizing the Near East as the Armenian Party's contemporaneous resolution testifies.⁶⁰ In accordance with this expansionist objective two organizational processes occurred in the region. Local parties

56. Obychin, Shanshiev, Shaumian, p. 83.

57. G.K. Ordzhonikidze (Sergo) Biografiia (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1962), p. 126.

58. Velikii Oktiabr' i Natsional'nyi Vopros, p. 145; Mikoian: Mysli i Vospominanii o Lenine, p. 79; Ts. P. Againn, Vekovaia Druzha Narodov Zakavkaz'ia, Chast' Vtoraia (Erevan: Aiastan, 1972), p. 139.

59. Ara Caprilan, "The Sovietization of Armenia: Case History in Imperialiam," Armenian Review, XX (Fall, 1957), p. 30.

60. Mikoian, Mysli i Vospominanii o Lenine, p. 79.

coalesced into unified territorial parties for Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaidzhan and the Kavburo took shape as the government's operating center. The latter was both a reflection and a cause of the centralizing process which also appeared in Narkomnats' activities. After the II Congress of the Communist Peoples of the East in November-December, 1919 the CC dismantled national party sections within the organizations of the eastern peoples; fearing that by preserving them it ran the risk of organizational separatism. Naturally the sections objected citing a lack of money, cadres, and mutual trust as obstacles to Sovietization. A commentator named Al-Harizi (an obvious pseudonym) was very critical of these objections.⁶¹ Dimanshtein also asserted that all the eastern republics' delegates must join Narkomnats' new Council of Nationalities. Because they were attached to VTsIK they had tended to elude central control. Or so he claimed.⁶² His measures were frankly directed towards reaffirming central control by Narkomnats against VTsIK's prior efforts to dismantle Narkomnats.⁶³

The Kavburo too was part of the broader pattern of reintegration and centralization. It became the local plenipotentiary of the CC and linked up with the Southeastern Buro of the Party. It decided important questions in all spheres of socialist construction (to use the Soviet term) and established its own apparatus to connect it with all local agencies.⁶⁴ It also

61. Zhizn' Natsional'nostei, No. 1 (58) (January 4, 1920), p. 2

62. Probably, as he later admitted, the real reason was one of bureaucratic competition and not effective controls.

63. *ibid.* No. 49 (57) (December 28, 1919), pp. 1-2.

64. Dzh. B. Guliev, Pod Znamenem Leninskoi Natsional'noi Politiki (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1972), p. 138.

evolved into the controller of all aid from Moscow and the decisive voice in regional agrarian policy. Though created for the purpose of implementing central directives, it became, under Kirov's and Ordzhonikidze's vigorous leadership, the actual director of the Sovietization of the entire North and Trans-Caucasus.⁶⁵ While it nominally attended only to Party affairs the Kavburo actually intervened decisively in issues of state building. For instance,

"It is characteristic that already in February 1920 --- a conference of Caucasian Bolsheviks recognized the necessity of establishing a close union between the future Soviet republics of Transcaucasia and the defense capacity of these republics the conference expressed itself in favor of their military, diplomatic, and economic strengthening."⁶⁶

This actively presaged the adoption, a year later, of the famous plan for the Transcaucasian federation.

On April 28 the Red Army conquered Azerbaidzhan. Though war with Poland temporarily retarded preparations for Sovietizing Georgia, Armenia, and Iran; there can be no doubt either of Ordzhonikidze's readiness to "self-determine" Georgia personally or of the driving Bolshevik conviction of its obligation to employ the same tactics as in Azerbaidzhan to the Sovietization of the other regions. These were the immediate objectives upon Moscow's agenda and Moscow certainly strove to control the unfolding sequence of events in the region.

The Kavburo thus held a restrictive conception of the autonomy of the

65. I.Ia. Kopylov, "Bor'ba Kavkazburo TsK RKP za Ob'edinennie Sovetskikh Respublik Zakavkaz'ia", Uchenye Zapiski Elabuzhskogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta, Tom XII, 1962, pp. 34-36.

66. *ibid.* p. 31; V.N. Merkviladze, "Istoriia Sozdaniia i Ukrepleniia Sovetskoi Natsional'noi Gosudarstvennosti v Gruzii (1921-1936)" (Avtoreferat Doktorskoii Dissertatsii, Tbilisi, 1966), pp. 43-44.

Transcaucasian republics. It announced clearly that it would not tolerate any moves towards autonomy, federalism, self-sufficiency, etc. in Party structure. Local party organs would enter as a unit into the RKP in order to safeguard the organizational principles of party construction to which it adhered.⁶⁷ And immediately following conquest of Azerbaidzhan the Soviet regime embarked on a policy of consolidation there and expansion of the Soviet model.

On May 17 Ordzhonikidze received the overlordship of all of Azerbaidzhan's domestic and foreign policies plus the right of supervision of fulfillment of Narkomindel and CC directives concerning relations with Iran, Armenia, and Georgia.⁶⁸ Considering his loyalty to Stalin we can observe how Stalin's control over Soviet activities in all these areas received significant bolstering by this award to Ordzhonikidze. Even before May 17 Ordzhonikidze, reflecting his own and Stalin's desires, twice cables Lenin to assure him that he could soon be in Tiflis. Both times Lenin ordered him to cease this and even to make peace with Georgia due to the war with Poland.⁶⁹ Simultaneously, however, the Red Army and Fleet under his command invaded northern Iran. But progress there did not move fast enough for him or Stalin. Starting in late October they conducted a systematic campaign for approval of an invasion of Georgia and Armenia notwithstanding the obvious risks.⁷⁰

67. Bor'ba za Pobedu Sovetskoj Vlasti v Azerbaidzhane, p. 457.

68. Garibdzhanian, V.I. Lenin i Bol'shevikii Zakavkaz'ia, pp. 268, 299.

69. V.I. Lenin, Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniia, Fifth Edition (Moscow: 1962), LI, 424.

70. ibid. LII, p. 14; p. 347n.; Mnatsakanian, Poslantsy Sovetskoj Rossii v Armenii, pp. 56-57; A.N. Mnatsakanian, P. Azizbekova, M. Traskunov, Sovetskaia Rossiia i Bor'ba za Ustanovlenie i Uprochenie Vlasti Sovetov v Zakavkaz'e (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1969), p. 192; A.N. Kheifets, Sovetskaia Rossiia i Sopredel'nye Strany Vostoka v Gody Grazhdanskoj Voiny (1918-1920) (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), pp. 156-157.

Stalin was not above fabricating threats to win Lenin's assent to his plans.⁷¹ But for some months time the plan failed. The Politburo resolution of November 27, taken after discussion of Stalin's report on his earlier tour of the region, had decided,

"To take, in relation to Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, and Persia, the maximum conciliatory policy, i.e. directed most of all to avoid war, not to pose the tasks of invasion neither of Georgia, Armenia, nor Persia (rather to strengthen Azerbaidzhan by sending seven division there) --- to strengthen in all ways, propaganda, agitation, development of Kombedy, and general Soviet construction in Azerbaidzhan, having charged comrade Stalin through the Orgburo to remove from everywhere the maximum number of Moslem Communists for work in Azerbaidzhan."⁷²

In Armenia this resolution fell apart almost immediately as it became a question of forcing Turkey to avoid war out of a probably manufactured Soviet concern to avert a supposedly imminent massacre of Armenians. It is likely that Stalin and Ordzhonikidze fanned these flames but the sources are inconclusive.⁷³ But in Georgia they soon showed their impatience. In December Ordzhonikidze again requested permission to invade Georgia, this time going so far as to send in a complete military plan of General Gekker's. On January 12, 1921 Lenin rejected this.⁷⁴ But on January 27 Stalin again cabled Lenin once more raising the specter of phony threats.

"Stalin stated that in connection with the strengthening of the anti-Soviet policy of the Menshevik government in Georgia a situation can arise which demands responsible measures with the application of armed force to defend the sovereignty and security of Soviet republics."⁷⁵

Therefore he inquired concerning the number and condition of troops in the

71. Lenin, PSS XLIII, 47.

72. Mnatsakanian, Poslantsy Sovetskoi Rossii v Armenii, pp. 117-118.

73. Ordzhonikidze Biografiia, pp. 143-144

74. *ibid.*

75. Lenin, PSS, LII, 66, 346n; Kharmandarian, pp. 56-57.

region. Lenin requested an answer from Ordzhonikidze on February 5 but the latter broke communications with Moscow or Lenin from that date.⁷⁶ Thus on February 11-12 the XI Army entered Georgia, following Gekker's plan to "rescue" an insurrection organized by the Kavburo at Borchallo. The whole plot seems to have been woven by Stalin who wished to minimize the outcry and brutality of a pure invasion against Lenin's desires.⁷⁷ Trotskii, the war commissar, knew nothing of the invasion for days and the Red Army proper did not appear until February 17, the Politburo and Kavburo not normally being guilty of such poor coordination. Due to the lack of contact with Ordzhonikidze the Politburo on February 14 had actually formally disapproved of military action.⁷⁸ All this is evidence for the thesis of Stalin's self-propelled action here. In November, 1921 Makharadze also complained retroactively to the CC about the invasion.

"When the Red Army moved off to Georgia not a single Communist cell of the party was informed of the aim of the operations, so that the intervention of the army and the proclamation of the Soviet regime in Georgia clearly took the character of a conquest from outside, since no one inside the country thought of organizing a revolt. --- No cell was ready to organize the Soviet regime."⁷⁹

Now Lenin was clearly alarmed that the brutal and mindless Shablioni-zatsiia occurring elsewhere would take place in Georgia. He bombarded Ordzhonikidze with telegrams urging moderate internal policies, class truce, and no offenses to Georgian national feeling in political policies.⁸⁰ On

76. *ibid.*

77. G. Cherechidze, "The Georgian Communist Party and the National Question", Caucasian Review, I (1955), 26-27.

78. *ibid.*; Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union, Revised Edition (New York: Atheneum Press, 1968), pp. 235-240.

79. Cherechidze, p. 28.

80. Pipes, pp. 240-241; S.I. Iakubovskaia, Ob'edinitel'noe Dvizhenie za Obrazovanie SSSR (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1947), p. 103; Bor'ba za Uprochenie Sovetskoi Vlasti v Gruzii, Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov (1921-1925gg.) (Tbilisi: Sabchota Bakartvelo, 1959), p. 56.

the other hand he originated or sanctioned (its not clear which) creation of the Transcaucasian Federation, the goal of unity, the economic unification of all three republics with Soviet Russia. The net result of these decisions coupled with his declining health gave Ordzhonikidze and Stalin Carte Blanche in regional affairs. The ensuing crisis is well known, even notorious, and well documented.⁸¹ It is sufficient for our purposes to note that the decision to federate the republics was not discussed preliminarily in the republican CC's and the opposition to the idea and to methods of its implementation or the tempo of its introduction was brushed aside.⁸² By November Makharadze openly protested Ordzhonikidze's and the XI Army's usurpation of power from the Georgian Party and Revkom.⁸³ Lenin's past concern for moderation turned out to be well founded because the rapacious and draconian policies of his regime and lieutenants in forcing socialism and class war upon alien soil triggered uprisings in Armenia and massive political crises in each republic.⁸⁴ Thus contemporaneously sizable factionalism permeated the Armenian Party between Avis and Kostanian, and the Azerbaidzhani Party between Akhmedov and Guseinov. Here the former, at least, protested Great Russian dominance of the apparat.⁸⁵ Indeed, after 1920 reports indicated a quite desperate situation in Azerbaidzhan.

81. Pipes, pp. 266-269; Robert C. Tucker, Stalin as Revolutionary 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), pp. 254-267 for further bibliography.

82. Dzh. B. Guliev, "Kopartii Azerbaidzhana v Bor'be za Sozdanie ZSFSR i Vkhozhdenie yeyo v Soiuza SSR", Voprosy istorii Kopartii Azerbaidzhana Tom 27, Trudy Instituta Istorii Partii TsK KP Azerbaidzhana, (Baku: 1964), p. 46.

83. Cherechidze, p. 28.

84. Sarkis Torossian, "Forty Years of Soviet Rule in Armenia," Studies on the Soviet Union, New Series, I, No. 3 (1962), 47.

85. Titov, p. 86.

The republican Sovnarkom did not function. Rather the Azrevkom directed and unified the republican commissariats' activities.⁸⁶ In 1921 Narkomnats reported that Russian peasants looked upon Soviet rule as a license to oppress Moslems again.⁸⁷ Ordzhonikidze, in August, 1921, lamented the absence of any contact between the Great Russian and Azeri peasants and called for a flexible policy to avert the severance of ties linking Baku with the countryside. He told his audience that the Baku Soviet should stand in relation to the republican Sovnarkom as did that of Moscow to the federal Sovnarkom.⁸⁸ This could hardly encourage feelings of Azeri autonomy. In October Narkomnats reported that nationality policy as yet received no support from local officials in cultural or political affairs. Three weeks later it reprinted an article from Azerbaidzhan Kommunist, decrying the weak class structure, poor fulfillment of decrees as well as the dominance of the Kulak and exclusion of the rural poor.⁸⁹

These failures both stimulated and were outcomes of the internal splits within the regional Party. These divisions took place everywhere else and usually demonstrated parallel configurations regarding outstanding local and national issues. Soviet sources are naturally reticent about details and often contradictory in ascribing responsibility to either Narimanov's or Guseinov's faction. For example,

"N.N. Narimanov's enjoying of great authority in Transcaucasia allowed

86. Mil'man p. 46.

87. Zhizn' Natsional'nostei No. 8 (106) (May 27, 1921), p. 3.

88. *ibid.*, No. 21 (119) (October 10, 1921) p. 2.

89. *ibid.*, No. 23 (121) (October 25, 1921), p. 4 and No. 26 (124)(November 19, 1921), p. 1.

some mistakes of a national character. There were cases when Narimanov opposed Azerbaidzhan to other republics of Transcaucasia. Significant mistakes were also tolerated by Narimanov's opponents. They ignored national moments in Party and Soviet construction, contraposing the Baku organization to the Communist Party of Azerbaidzhan."⁹⁰

Elsewhere we find that his opponents really attacked the policy of Nep., i.e. concessions to the peasant economy.⁹¹

Narimanov sought to use Lenin's letter of April 14, 1921 to the Transcaucasian parties, calling for the introduction of Nep and the circumspect construction of the Soviet order with due respect for local national conditions, as a club over his rivals. At a Party plenum in August, 1921 Effendiev responded in kind for the opposition, stating that,

"Young comrades, just out of Komsomol, and commencing work do not trust Ordzhonikidze and Stalin, the representatives of the center. It is said that higher organs do not give the line of work, and Lenin's letter is not a line of work. It is true that the comrades have to push this letter aside."⁹²

Narimanov's rejoinder indicates that he, like Effendiev, realized that calls for centralization or central direction of a line of work often were covers for local intrigues against uncongenial rivals or politicians. Others' work should be centralized but not his own. Thus he felt free to ignore Effendiev's calls for centralization. Since delegates defined Lenin's letter as they saw fit either in a "left" or "right" manner; it was necessary for the CC to send a commission there to give directing orders.⁹³

90. Ordzhonikidze Biografiia, p. 160.

91. M.E. Mamedov, Nep i Politicheskoe Vospitanie Rabochego Klassa (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1966), p. 36.

92. Kharmandarian, pp. 76-77.

93. *ibid.*

The CC only too gladly complied and the ensuing events served to benefit only Moscow. The Kavburo decreed an end to Azeri factionalism in August and the CC upheld this by dispatching Ordzhonikidze to enforce it.⁹⁴ In 1921-22 he recommended overthrowing Narimanov and promotion of his rivals. Instead Moscow removed everyone and transferred them to Moscow. This occurred because Lenin was ready, against Ordzhonikidze, to purge Narimanov's rivals. In October all the factionalists were thus threatened with expulsion from the Party if they didn't come to Moscow. Kirov became Secretary of the Azerbaidzhani CP and Stalin headed a commission that gave directing instructions to the rival factions. The Kavburo assumed control of the execution of Nep-recruiting nationalities, arranging a class truce, and pursuing a policy of linking worker and peasant, etc.⁹⁵

Moscow's general response to internal political disputes in Azerbaidzhan and elsewhere during this period was the imposition of central authority. Nominally Azerbaidzhan was still independent but the reality is revealed in the joint telegram of Lenin and Stalin of September 26, 1921 to Baku regarding foreign trade.

"Under no circumstances conclude a treaty neither with the Germans nor with anyone else on foreign trade without the agreement of the regional Commissariat of Foreign Trade and without the sanction of the Central Committee."⁹⁶

Reliance on central plenipotentiaries continued unabated in 1921 and reached gigantic proportions in Transcaucasia and all Russia.

"From March to August, 1921 alone, at the direction of the Central

94. Ordzhonikidze Biografiia, p. 160.

95. Kharmandarian, pp. 76-79.

96. *ibid.*

Committee of the Communist Party, 1,098 workers were dispatched, 654 to the Caucasian Bureau, 380 to the Central Committee of the Communist party of Belorussia, 73 to the Tatar Obkom, 56 to the Chuvash Obkom, etc. In September-November another 1,357 Communists went out into the national republics. At the same time in one of the addresses of the People's Commissariat of Nationality Affairs to local organs it was pointed out that the basis of their task was to raise the masses to Soviet power and merge their best representatives with the latter."⁹⁷

Thus there is little doubt that, in the sphere of nationality policy, Nep and the measures connected with it were designed to augment considerably the effective capacity of the state to extend its influence and control over more and more areas of socio-economic life. This was a clear goal even in 1920 before Nep. And it is similarly incontrovertible that the resulting struggles provoked ever more clandestine, bitter, and intense political struggles during the twenties. The process of Gleisaltung found expression everywhere, for example in the terms of inclusion for the Azeri delegation to Narkomnats. This long document effectively converted the delegation into a transmission belt whose main function would be the coordination of Leninist policy among various official bodies and verification of its fulfillment as an adjunct of those bodies. In return it would furnish Moscow with supposedly accurate information concerning local conditions.⁹⁸ Narkomnats' own representative to the Azrevkom from the RSFSR entered into the republic with a consultative voice and all of his functions had to be carried out in conformity with the existing treaty relations of the two states.⁹⁹ In short, he was effectively Moscow's eye

97. Osushchestvlenie Printsipov Internatsionalizma v Natsional'nom Politike KPSS (Moscow: Mysl', 1975), p. 163.

98. Guliev, Pod Znamenem Leninskoii Natsional'noi Politiki, p. 52

99. Istoriia Gosudarstva i Prava Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR (Baku: Elm, 1973), II, 24.

in Baku.

Centralizing policies also enjoyed prominent local support. In Azerbaidzhan Shakhtakhtinskii proposed in March, 1921 to go back to the discredited scheme of 1918, i.e., unifying all of Transcaucasia, Dagestan, and the Mountaineer Republics of the North Caucasus with the RSFSR anticipating Stalin's autonomization plan of 1922. Existing territorial divisions would become Gubernias thus liquidating all questions of borders and economics at issue among these peoples. Stalin ridiculed the idea because it was clearly inexpedient then and incapable of implementation by Moscow due to fear of more revolts and opposition. Nonetheless he adapted it to his own vision.¹⁰⁰ Narkomnats' archives also suggest that Narkomnats may actually have decided the location, function, and type of factories being built in Azerbaidzhan during 1921-24. Either that or it, at least, participated in these decisions and possessed the information in statistics on the local peasant economy.¹⁰¹

The centralizing espoused by Shakhtakhtinskii turned up elsewhere during 1921-22. In December, 1921 Miasnikov, Party Secretary in Armenia first proposed inclusion of the Transcaucasian republics in the composition of VTsIK.¹⁰² Stalin, soon after this, in a typical move for him, utilized this to commence planning his autonomization plan. On January 13, 1922 he wrote to Lenin that,

"Some comrades are proposing to achieve in the shortest time a

100. Kharmandarian, pp. 97-98.

101. Guliev, Pod Znamenem Leninskoï Natsional'noi Politiki, pp. 252-256, 262-264.

102. Kharmandarian, p. 338.

unification of all independent republics with the RSFSR on the principles of autonomy. But he, "fully separated from this point of view", considers, however, that it is unrealizable before the Genoa conference due to the insufficient time for preparation." As is well known this plan of Stalin's "autonomization" stems from the fact that Stalin saw no existing difference in the forms of federation and equated them with autonomy."¹⁰³

Analogous developments took place in cultural policy after 1922 and with regard to party composition after the crises of 1922-23. The long-held desire of Moslem reformers to modernize or reform the Arabic script, if not to replace it, as in Kemalist Turkey, with a latinized script, was a particularly cherished aim of Narimanov and other Azeri Communists. As Robert Conquest has observed,

"The purpose of the reform was two-fold. First, it was maintained that the simpler Latin alphabet would aid the drive against illiteracy. Second, it was considered a means for combatting the influence of Islam in that the Arabic alphabet was the alphabet of the Moslem religion and one of the instruments of the enslavement of the masses through the means of the priesthood."¹⁰⁴

Shakhtakhtinskii, a partisan of Latinization, blandly asserted that neither Moslems in general nor the clergy in particular opposed the reform.¹⁰⁵

Simultaneously Narimanov instituted an Azerbaidzhanian committee to reform the alphabet.¹⁰⁶ In 1923 Azerbaidzhan Latinized the script used in its higher schools.¹⁰⁷ At the same time opposition to Latinization emerged, claiming that it would destroy Moslem unity, make Moslems literate in Arabic illiterate in Latin, and render Arabic literature inaccessible.¹⁰⁸

103. *ibid.*

104. Robert Conquest, Soviet Nationalities Policy in Practice (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 72.

105. *Zhizn' Natsional'nostei*, No. 4 (10) (139) (March 22, 1922), p. 4.

106. *ibid.* No. 1 (9) (136) (February 25, 1922), p. 13.

107. Guliev, Pod Znamenem Leninskoi Natsional'noi Politiki, p. 375.

108. *ibid.* p. 374.

By 1922 local political agencies representing Moscow had resolved upon intervention in this matter.

"Of 50 peoples in the Caucasus 46 did not have their own scripts, schools, or teachers. Therefore when N.N. Narimanov in Baku, together with a large group of specialists, proposed perfecting an Azerbaïdzhani alphabet and creating alphabets for a number of peoples, V.I. Lenin gave every support to this beginning. The beginning of the creation of Kabardinian, Balkar, and Cherkess scripts was organized at that time in Baku with the practical cooperation of the Kavburo of the CC of the Party, and the leader of the Azerbaïdzhani government, N.N. Narimanov."¹⁰⁹

The reconstituted large collegium of Narkomnats also decided in 1922 to organize a special commission within its own perimeter to facilitate the transition to Latinization albeit in a way which would strive to minimize opposition and excessive dislocation in Moslem areas.¹¹⁰ Such was the stated opinion at the time. However subsequent accounts display a more cynical motivation for Latinization; to wit, that it was a halfway step to the future introduction of the Cyrillic script which was still inexpedient. Conquest cites an article from a 1966 issue of Voprosy Istorii giving precisely this fear of being tarred with the brush of Tsarist Russification policies as a motive for Latinization.¹¹¹

Thus by 1923 with Lenin dying, Trotsky compromised, the Georgian and Sultangalievite oppositions routed or purged; nothing stood in the way of the path to Stalinist centralization and his personal vindictiveness. The centralizing process here assumed a particularly ruthless color due to the personal factors involved; e.g. in Stalin's remark of 1924 that "Georgia

109. Kh. G. Beriketov, Lenin i Kavkaz (NaI'chik: El'brus, 1970), p. 212.

110. Guliev, Pod Znamenem Leninskoi Natsional'noi Politiki, p. 373.

111. Conquest, p. 75.

must be plowed over." In purging the intellectuals from national parties after the Georgian and Tatar oppositions of 1923 Stalin displayed his preferred method of using his personnel machine to alter political realities. Thus in the Georgian party during 1924-25 the percentage of workers went from 21.6% to 48.6%, peasants from 52.8% to 48.8%, and white collar and others (Sluzhashchie) from 25.6% to 14.5%.¹¹² The jurist Lev Magerovskii also observed that with respect to the constitutions of the Transcaucasian republics,

"No one can establish with absolute certainty that --- in its line towards centralization it goes considerably further than the constitution of the USSR, and, in contrast to the latter, devotes exceedingly little space in its structure to national factors. By depriving the Union republics of the right to unilateral secession from the Federation; it comes into contradiction with the principles proclaimed by the October Revolution."¹¹³

But what did legal niceties mean to Stalin flush with victory in his homeland. His sole criteria was the maximizing of centralized dictatorial power for its own sake. Thus the experience of the struggle for power throughout Transcaucasia was both a contributory and emblematic one in reference to the national question during 1917-24. Where Mikoian had sown Stalin, and not native nationalist sentiment, reaped.

112. M.V. Mikhaitsyn, "Iz Istorii Bor'by Kommunisticheskoi Partii za Ukreplenie Rabochego Iadra v Svoikh Riadakh (1921-1925gg)", Uchenye Zapiski Vysshei Partiinoi Shkoly pri TsK KPSS, Vypusk 4, (Moscow: Mysl', 1975), p. 75.

113. Conquest, p. 39.