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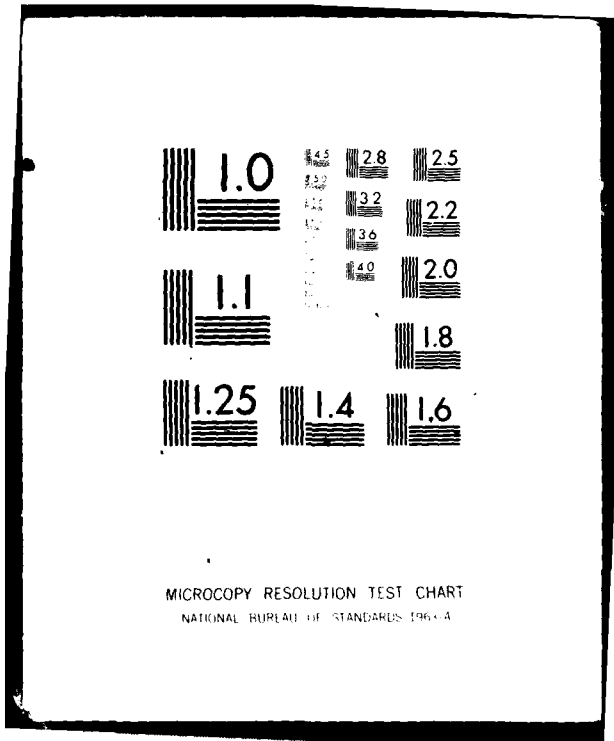
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GEORGIANS IN TSARIST RUSSIA

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Among the numerous relations between the rulers of the Imperial Russia and the USSR on the one hand, and Georgia on the other, the question of national self-determination deserves a position of a paramount importance. An adequate treatment of this perplexing topic requires a broader theoretical framework dealing with nationalism in general and its historical significance in particular.

Nationalism is undoubtedly one of the burning issues today and it has been so for more than a century, despite the "prophetic" slogans of the Communist Manifesto which "treated nationalism as a dwindling survival from an earlier day, about to disappear for good."<sup>1</sup> Publication of the Communist Manifesto was soon followed by "the greatest explosion of nationalism Europe had ever known."<sup>2</sup> Contrary to Marxian prediction, "it was nationalism that would set its seal upon the rest of the nineteenth century and dominate the twentieth to the present moment, and is spreading now from Europe, its home, to Asia and Africa, which hitherto had not known the nation." It is an irony of history that "the would-be monolith of international communism has been shattered on the rock of nationalism" and that our times are witnessing "the growing disintegration of the aggressive Communist Bloc from the hands of yesterday's bete noire, the national spirit."<sup>3</sup> That internationalism today is little more than veneer, and that nationalism plays a decisive role in shaping the destinies of communist countries is at the core of Emil Lengyel's book, Nationalism - the Last Stage of Communism.<sup>4</sup>

Since nationalism is such a crucial force both in the free world and in the countries dominated by communism, and since there are many stateless nations living within the multinational states, the problem of self-determination of such nations must be systematically explored. Are all such nations entitled to an independent national statehood, or should one agree with Engels' distinction between the "historic" people who have right to preserve and further their nationality and the "historyless" or the "inferior" people who must be denied this right? Marx and Engels were what Lenin would call "great power chauvinists," opponents of Lenin's principle of "self-determination for all nationalities to the point of separation." Applying their views in practice, both Marx and Engels supported the Hungarian and Polish gentry against their "historyless" Slavic peasants.<sup>5</sup>

\*Paper presented at the International Conference of Slavists at Banff, Alberta, Sept. 4-7, 1974.

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Concerning these "historyless" peoples, Engels once wrote: "There is not a land in Europe without . . . one or more ruins of people . . . driven back and subjected by the nation which later became the bearer of historical development. These castoffs of nations, mercilessly trampled down by the course of history, will remain until their complete denationalization and extermination, fanatical bearers of counterrevolution, as their continuing existence is itself a protest against a great historical revolution."<sup>6</sup>

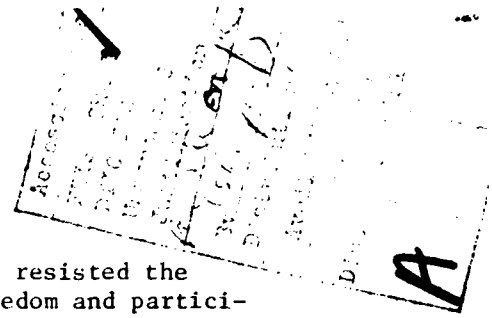
Should one deny the right to a national statehood to Georgians who "formed an independent and highly civilized kingdom within the Greco-Roman world when the ancestors of the Russians were still nomads wandering about the draughty steppes? The Georgians had accepted Christianity more than six centuries before the Russians, had been a bulwark of Christendom in the East for a millennium and a half, and had entered voluntarily under the Russian sceptre - only to be treated as if they were barbarians."<sup>7</sup> Should such a nation, despite of her incessant struggle for the nationhood, be denied the right to independent national existence and be classified with "those numerous small relics of peoples which, after having figured for a longer or shorter period on the stage of history, were finally absorbed as integral portions into one or the other more powerful nations whose greater vitality enabled them to overcome greater obstacles?"<sup>8</sup>

This study cannot answer these crucial questions. It has a much more limited objective of pointing out some important factors in relationship between Georgia and Russia - Imperial and Soviet - which would contribute to understanding of the extremely complex and ambivalent problem of national self-determination. To simplify the presentation, this paper is divided into three sections: (1) Georgia and Imperial Russia; (2) Independent Georgian Republic; and (3) Georgia as a Part of the USSR.

#### Georgia and Imperial Russia

Georgia's geographic location at the crossroads of Eastern and Western civilizations contributed to her cultural development but also frequently transformed her into a theater of devastating wars. To avoid complete subjugation by her Mohammedan neighbors, Georgia - a christian country since the early fourth century - asked for Russian protection and was incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1801. The obvious gain to Georgia was relative peace and security, economic gains flowing from integration with Russia and some cultural gains of contact with the West through Russian Empire.

However, the price paid for these benefits was high. The Russian administration was, in general, bureaucratic, overcentralized



and politically oppressive. Russian authorities resisted the attempts of Georgians to gain some degree of freedom and participation in government, except on the local level. All vestiges of independence were destroyed: in 1811 the Georgian Church was subjected to the authority of the Russian Holy Synod; national education and language were suppressed and in 1884 the Georgian army was incorporated into the Russian imperial forces. The resolution of the Tenth Congress of CPSU stated that "the policy of Tsarism consisted in destroying among the non-Russian peoples the rudiments of any statehood, in mutilating their culture, restricting their language, and Russifying them"<sup>9</sup>

Russian nationalism with its roots in Pan-Slavism, "would crush all the smaller nations which Russia had annexed."<sup>10</sup> Iakob Gogebashvili contrasts such a Russian with Georgian patriotism in following terms: "Our patriotism is of course of an entirely different kind: it consists solely in a sacred feeling toward our mother land; . . . in it there is no hate for other nations, no desire to enslave anybody, no urge to impoverish anybody. Our patriots desire to restore Georgia's right to self-government and their own civil rights, to preserve their national characteristics and culture, without which no people can exist as a society of human beings."<sup>11</sup> The first period of Russian rule, covering the reigns of Alexander I (1801-1825) and Nicholas I (1825-1855), was a time of consolidation of Russian control over Georgia. It was punctured by Russian military operations against Turks and Persians, as well as against the local uprisings in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and other Caucasian provinces, which were mainly triggered by the attempts of feudal royalty to regain their thrones or by the discontent caused by oppression, corruption and graft of some Russian officials.

The succession of capable Russian governors like prince Tsitsianov, generals Ermolov and Paskevich, and count Vorontsov, brought Georgia military security and contributed to the growth of the markets, flourishing of trade and revival of intellectual life. On the negative side, proposals to set up Georgian royal princes to govern under the Russian supervision were rejected and feudal order was maintained without, however, permitting Georgian landlords to participate in local government.<sup>12</sup> Under rule of the popular viceroy Vorontsov (1844-1854), military subjugation ended and the Russian bureaucracy started to use more civilized methods of administration. This period was characterized by decline of feudalism, beginning of industrial revolution, rise of capitalism and advances in education.<sup>13</sup>

Under Alexander II (1855-1881), following Russian example, Georgian serfs were emancipated. Like Russian serfs, Georgian peasants were subjected to heavy redemption payments to be paid by installments to their former landlords. In addition, one third of peasant's land was given to the landlord as a special compensation. Economic conditions in Georgian agriculture were deteriorating. The average

peasant holding declined from ten to twenty desyatins (one desyatin = 2.7 acres) at the beginning of nineteenth century to five to six desyatins by the time Georgians were emancipated (1864). Moreover, communal land was seized by the State and by the powerful landowners. All this resulted in a "land hunger" and peasant discontent as well as in an emergence of a class of rich peasants or kulaks - an inevitable concomitant of a poverty-stricken agricultural proletariat. The ensuing "class struggle" in the country side caused sporadic peasant revolts.<sup>14</sup>

The liberal reforms of Alexander II were not applied to Georgia. Neither Zemstvo law, nor Russian jury system, adopted in 1864, were applicable to her. Georgian peasant communities had village councils and rural bailiffs who were responsible to Russian administration for carrying out compulsory work assignments and collecting taxes. These village councils were completely subjugated to the authority of the local Russian military commander and Russian police. All legal matters were settled by the Russian administration.<sup>15</sup>

The last thirty years of the nineteenth century witnessed a minor industrial revolution in Georgia. Its population almost doubled, industry started to develop and the "craze for business activity and money-making" ensued.<sup>16</sup> The 1870's was a decade of frustration and disillusionment for both landlords and peasants. The former did not like the agrarian reform, while the latter did not see in it much improvement of their lot. Russian and Georgian intelligentsia "were seething with resentment at the dead weight of autocracy which excluded them from participation in government."<sup>17</sup>

After the assassination of Alexander II, a new emperor, Alexander III (1881-1894), intensified Russian reaction. The minorities in the Empire suffered a systematic campaign of persecution and denigration. New obstacles were placed in the way towards the acquisition of full civil rights for Georgians.

The reigns of Alexander II and Alexander III witnessed the upswing of Georgian national consciousness. In Lang's words: "The emancipation of serfs dealt a massive blow to the decaying feudal order. The growth of capitalism, the spread of education, and the emergence of a vocal intelligentsia focused attention on the inadequacies of Tsarist rule, and heightened popular dislike for alien domination. The appearance of magnificently gifted writers gave Georgians a new intellectual self-confidence. All this helped to pave the way for active participation by the Georgians in the revolutionary struggle which culminated in the events of 1917."<sup>18</sup>

While in Russia a strong wave of a Pan-Slavistic nationalism intensified the oppression of the minorities, Georgian patriotic

resistance led to an emergence of several politico-ideological movements. The moderate nationalist movement called Pirveli Dasi or First Group was headed by Georgian prince Ilia Chavchavadze, the poet, novelist and orator, while the more radical Second Group or Meore Dasi was founded by Giorgi Tsereteli and Niko Nikoladze. These two movements were social and literary in contrast to the primarily political organization of the young Marxists who were called the Third Group or Mesame Dasi and formed later the Georgian revolutionary Social-Democratic Party. Among the most prominent leaders of this party were Nikolai Chkheidze, Menshevik president of the Petrograd Soviets in 1917, and Noe Zhordania, the future president of independent Georgian republic.<sup>19</sup>

A strong Populist or Narodnik movement made a considerable progress in Georgia during the 1970's. The populists believed in the moral and economic potentialities of the peasant class and attempted to induce a popular uprising against the autocracy. Social-Democrats disagreed with the Populists because Georgian peasants were strongly for individual ownership of land, monarchists at heart and incapable to understand Populists' revolutionary vision of the new society. Narodniks were not successful in Georgia precisely because of these peasants' attitudes. Later on, Populist ideas were revived by the Russian and Georgian Social-Revolutionary parties.

Zhordania and his Social-Democrat followers believed that society must develop in stages from feudalism to capitalism to socialism. They were convinced that Georgia was in the intermediate position between feudalism and socialism. They rejected Chavchavadze's idea of Georgian national revival within the framework of Russian Empire and believed that salvation for Georgia lies in cooperation between the Russian and Georgian working classes. Georgia could hope to achieve national fulfillment only after the destruction of the Russian imperial system.

Ilia Chavchavadze strongly disagreed with such views. For him, Zhordania was claiming to be "sent into the world to alter the axis on which the globe revolves, and make heaven and earth turn to his will and pleasure."<sup>20</sup> Ironically, Russian authorities at that time were more concerned with activities of the nationalist Georgians who followed Chavchavadze than with socialist propaganda of the Social-Democrats.

The left wing of the Social-Democrat organization assailed Zhordania and his moderate "legal Marxists" as lukewarm intellectuals incapable to lead the nation toward the revolution against Tsardom. Noe Zhordania was influenced by the ideology of Western democratic socialism. He saw in Georgia necessary preconditions for attainment

of socialism. In his words: "Nationalism unites Georgia, economic interests - divide it. Capitalism destroyed idyllic patriarchal relationships, united each individual nation. And yet the same capitalism has divided the nation into two factions - rich and poor, landowner and landless peasant, bourgeois and worker - and implanted social friction, given birth to the class struggle and summoned the working class into the political arena."<sup>21</sup>

Zhordania believed that his native Georgia is developing according to the scheme predicted by Karl Marx. He saw rapid economic and industrial development, low pays, long working days, absence of labor unions and security. The agrarian reform did not improve peasants' conditions. They owned only about six percent of the arable land and were land hungry. Most of the indigenous Georgian nobility were impoverished, while most of industrial magnates controlling economy were non-Georgians. These conditions were definitely conducive to the "class struggle" predicted by Marx. Ironically, like many other middle-class socialists, Zhordania "failed to realize that the 'class struggle' for the intensification of which they enthusiastically campaigned, would result in a holocaust of which they themselves would be among the victims."<sup>22</sup>

In 1903, Social-Democrats split into two factions: Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks believed in an evolutionary process leading to a constitutional republic first and then to a true socialist state, while the Bolsheviks desired to overthrow Tsarism by means of a revolution and by establishing the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a necessary precondition for building communism.

The rule of the last Tsar, Nicholas II, was darkened by many events foreshadowing the downfall of Russian autocracy. World-wide depression of 1900 was followed by the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 and by the revolution of 1905. Unemployment and poor harvest of 1901 led to workers' unrest in Tbilisi and other parts of Georgia. Among other leading socialist intellectuals, Zhordania was arrested and spent several months in jail.

During the 1905 revolution in Russia, the "legal Marxists" or Mensheviks called for ending the war, overthrow of autocracy and convocation of a Constituent Assembly composed of representatives of the whole nation.<sup>23</sup> In both Russia and Caucasus, the Bolsheviks were denouncing the Democratic Socialists and the Liberal Constitutionalists for their moderate stand. The Bolsheviks feared that once the Tsar granted a parliamentary regime with safeguards to the minority rights, the support for terrorism would disappear and this would postpone the arrival of the communist millennium for an indefinite time.<sup>24</sup>

The period of unrest and political upheaval in Georgia did not stop till the end of the war and the proclamation of Imperial



manifesto of October 1905 in which the Tsar guaranteed "inviolability of person, freedom of faith, speech, assembly and association. No law was to be enacted without the consent of the new national assembly or Duma."<sup>25</sup> Mensheviks were satisfied, while Bolsheviks continued to call for revolution to overthrow the Tsardom. In the meantime, Russian government succeeded to quell the rebellion in all parts of the Empire, including Georgia, with the aid of the troops which have returned home from the front.

Russian Social-Democrats refused to participate in the First Duma which was dominated by the Constitutional Democrats, or Cadets, under P. N. Milyukov. Noe Zhordania was elected to represent Social-Democrats of Georgia together with Ramishvili, Gomarteli and Japaridze. Ilia Chavchavadze was representing Georgian gentry and aristocracy. Zhordania's Georgian Social-Democratic faction was dominating the left-wing opposition in the First Duma which assembled in May 1906. After the imperial government declared Duma's projected reforms "inadmissible," Duma passed a resolution censuring the government. The Tsar responded with a dissolution of Duma in July 1906. Some two hundred members of the dissolved Duma went to Finland and there, in Viborg, issued a resolution calling for passive resistance of the people of Russia till the new Duma is convened again. Whereupon, Russian government excluded them from political life and imposed upon them prison sentences.<sup>26</sup>

The Second Duma, assembled in March 1907, was dominated by Labor groups since Social-Democrats withdrew their boycott. This Second Duma was also dissolved in due course, while Social-Democrats were accused of "armed conspiracy" and many of them sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. When, in May 1907, the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party met in London, Russia was represented primarily by the Bolsheviks while Georgian representatives were largely the Mensheviks. Lenin, who had difficulties to get his resolutions carried at this Congress, said to Zhordania: "Why don't you Georgians cease meddling in Russia's affairs? You don't understand our people, their psychology, their ways and customs. If you only would leave us alone to sort out our affairs in our own way, we could soon get them straight. Just agree to accept autonomy for yourselves, and do what you like in Georgia. We shall not bother you so long as you do not bother us."<sup>27</sup>

The Third and the Fourth Dumas showed a significant swing to the Right. This was achieved by the governmentally sponsored rigged elections. The Fourth Duma sat from 1912 to 1917, the year of March Revolution. Georgia was permitted to have only three representatives in it: Prince Gelovani represented the nobility, while Chkheidze and Chkhenkeli - the Georgian Mensheviks. In 1912 the agitation of the Georgian representatives in Duma brought up cancellation of the

residual redemption payments the peasants were obliged to pay for their freedom. This long overdue reform, however, did not solve the land hunger of Georgian peasants. At the same time, the conditions of workers in Georgian industry were not improving either.<sup>28</sup>

The German declaration of War on Russia in 1914 was met with mixed feelings in Georgia, since the Social-Democrats, both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, were Germanophile. The war in Caucasus started with Turkish offensive which was stopped and changed into a strong Russian counter-offensive by general Yudenich.

After the abdication of Nicholas II and March Revolution of 1917, a provisional government, formed in Petrograd, appointed a special committee to administer Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan - Ozakom. Ozakom consisted mainly of Caucasian members of the Duma and was supposed to be "a collective Viceroy, only weaker and without the prestige which the representatives of the Tsar had enjoyed."<sup>29</sup> Kerenski government in Russia was weakened by a rivalry between the administration and the Soviets. In Georgia the ultimate power was shared by the Ozakom and the Soviets of Worker's Deputies in which Mensheviks had an overwhelming majority.

Georgian Social-Democrats rejected the extremist slogans of class war and were pleading for national unity. "The present revolution," declared Zhordania, "is not the affair of some one class; the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are together directing the affairs of the revolution . . . We must walk together with those forces which participate in the movement of the revolution and organize the Republic with our forces in common."<sup>30</sup>

Though there was little divergence of aim between the Georgian Social-Democrats and the Kerenski regime, Tbilisi and Petrograd were not always in complete harmony. The provisional government tended to postpone important decisions until constituent assembly was set in operation. There was a basic disagreement between the Bolsheviks, who wanted to stop war immediately, and the Mensheviks, who insisted on continuing war till victory. Russian army was demoralized. The soldiers wanted to go home and participate in division of the estates of dispossessed nobility. Meanwhile, in November 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia.<sup>31</sup>

#### Independent Georgian Republic

Immediately after the fall of Kerenski government, the Regional Center of Soviets met at Tbilisi together with the executive committees of the Social-Democratic and Social-Revolutionary parties and brought up a resolution calling for "the liquidation of the Bolshevik insurrection and the immediate convocation of all-Russian

constituent assembly."<sup>32</sup> Georgian Social-Democrats deplored communist victory in Russia. Zhordania lamented that "a misfortune has befallen us. The connection with Russia has been broken and Transcaucasia has been left alone. We have to stand on our own feet and either help ourselves or perish through anarchy."<sup>33</sup>

In the same month the Transcaucasian Soviet and party organizations had set up a provisional government called the Transcaucasian Commissariat consisting of three Georgians, three Armenians, three Azerbaijanis and two Russians, none of them a Bolshevik. Ignoring the armistice concluded in December 1917, the Turks advanced in February 1918. They requested the evacuation of all territory abandoned by Russia at Brest-Litovsk. Since the Transcaucasian Commissariat did not recognize the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, it rejected Turkish claims. Turkish ultimatum to surrender the disputed territory was met by the Transcaucasian Diet - a local substitute for Russian Constituent Assembly - with a declaration of war on Turkey. Turks seized all the requested territory by force. On April 22, 1918, The Transcaucasian Diet proclaimed Transcaucasia an independent Democratic Federative Republic.

When peace talks were resumed with Turks in Batumi in May 1918, Turkish representatives demanded some Georgian and Armenian territory and control of all Transcaucasian railways. On May 26, 1918, in response to Turkish ultimatum, Irakli Tsereteli proclaimed Georgia a sovereign country. This proclamation was confirmed on the same day by the Georgian national assembly.<sup>34</sup>

The newborn republic was placed under a German protectorate. Independent Armenia and Azerbaijani republics came into existence on May 28, 1918. Part of Armenia was overrun by Turkish forces and the republic ceased to exist. The Azerbaijan was made a puppet of the Turkish military command. Only patronage and protection of Turkey's ally, Germany, saved Georgia from the same fate.<sup>35</sup> Military collapse of the Imperial Germany in November 1918 resulted in the termination of German hegemony over Georgia, which was replaced by the less popular occupation by the British forces. The Turks were forced to withdraw to the west of the pre-war Turko-Russian frontier.

Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan sent their delegations to peace conference in Paris. In January 1920, after the defeat of White army under Kolchak and Denikin, who refused to recognize Transcaucasian independence, the Supreme Council gave the de facto recognition to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. By the end of

1919, British troops withdrew from Transcaucasia, except from Batum, where they stayed till the middle of 1920. The Transcaucasian politics after the November resolution was characterized by the absence of Russian power. Military power of Turkey, Germany, and later, of Great Britain filled the vacuum left by this absence. After the British withdrawal, it was only a question of time for the Soviet Union to establish its control over the area.<sup>36</sup>

The Soviet government boycotted the Transcaucasian republics as puppets of foreign powers. Azerbaijani republic was overthrown by a communist uprising in Baku and an Azerbaijani Socialist Soviet Republic was proclaimed in January 1920.<sup>37</sup> The fall of Armenia followed soon. In summer 1920, the hope for the support of allies faded away. In October 1920, Turks were advancing and defeating Armenian forces. Soviet army moved into Armenia from the northeast and established Armenian Socialist Soviet Republic.<sup>38</sup>

At first, Soviet Russia refused to recognize Georgian independence. It declared in December 1918 that "all persons who consider themselves Georgian citizens are recognized as Russian citizens, and as such are subject to all decrees and the enactments of the Soviet authority of the RSFSR."<sup>39</sup> When in winter of 1919-20 the Soviet government invited Georgia to join forces against White armies, Zhordania and Gerechkori refused stating that they "preferred the imperialists of the West to the fanatics of the East."<sup>40</sup>

However, Communist Russia recognized Georgian Republic de jure on May 7, 1920, under condition that Georgia refuses to grant asylum to troops hostile to the Soviet Union. Georgia also had to recognize "the right of free existence and activity of the Communist party . . . and in particular its right to free meetings and publications, including organs of the press."<sup>41</sup> After termination of military operations against the defeated remnants of the White army, Soviet armed forces were massed in adjacent territories. On February 1921, the Red army entered Georgia from the Soviet Azerbaijan. It also attacked from the north and along the Black Sea. Detachments of the Red army took Tbilisi on February 25, 1921, and the formation of a Georgian Socialist Soviet Republic was announced.<sup>42</sup> Zhordania and his government fled the country and headed for Istanbul.

Lenin and Trotsky were unhappy when they learned about the heavy fighting between the Red army and Georgian republican units. They permitted the military advance only after they were assured by Stalin, as a Commissar of Nationalities, that "a massive Bolshevik uprising had occurred in Tbilisi" and that "Georgian masses have overthrown the Mensheviks." The Soviet government was unwilling to create an impression that it overthrew by force of arms other independent socialist regime.<sup>43</sup>

Later, Trotsky defended the propriety of this military action. He accused Georgian Republic of being a reactionary state, a tool of imperialism. Georgia, he claimed, was oppressing its own minorities and leading wars against her neighbors. According to Trotsky, it would have been a betrayal not to help the workers and peasants of Georgia who were oppressed by the Menshevik regime. Moreover, since Georgia was incapable to maintain peace in Transcaucasia, the attainment of such a peace by incorporation of Georgia into the Soviet Union was of a great political and cultural value. In Trotsky's view, the principle of national self-determination, accepted by the Soviet Union, was never considered an absolute concept. This principle is acceptable only when it is directed against the feudal, capitalist and imperialist states. If transformed by bourgeoisie into a weapon used against the proletarian revolution, this principle of national self-determination should be rejected.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the very difficult over-all political and military-strategic situation and the adverse economic conditions, the young Georgian republic introduced a significant agrarian reform. The maximum norm for individual land holding was established and all land belonging to individuals in excess of this norm was expropriated together with all estates formerly owned by the Russian crown and the Church. About one million acres of such arable land was taken over and sold to private individuals. In terms of one communist writer, this "agrarian reform . . . curtailed the nobility's possession of the land; . . . the entire course adopted by the Social-Democratic government in the villages led to the formation of a strong rural bourgeoisie and the development of capitalism in agriculture, i.e., to the inevitable destruction of all the survivals of feudalism."<sup>45</sup>

The Menshevik government of Georgia nationalized coal mines, mineral springs, hydroelectrical power, manganese industry, the railways and ports of the country. It introduced right to strike, unemployment and sickness insurance, eight-hour labor day, and prohibited child labor and night work for women. Early in 1918, Georgia's first regular university was opened in Tbilisi which rapidly rose to a dominant position in country's educational life. There was no persecution of the former nobility and the middle class until the Communist annexation in 1921. There were, however, some signs of nationalistic and chauvinistic fervor: Russian was prohibited and Georgian established as an official language, while Saint George replaced red banner.<sup>46</sup>

Though the government of the free Georgia had made great efforts to improve social, economic and political aspects of life of its constituents under extremely trying circumstances, it was severely

criticized by its foes on both sides, Right and Left. While Bolsheviks branded Zhordania and his government as "tool of the German and later of the British imperialists, agents of the darkest obscurantism," many Georgian patriots condemned them for placing "socialist class warfare before national unity and . . . (for adopting) . . . social and economic policies which played into hands of the Communists and facilitated the annexation of Georgia by Soviet Russia."<sup>47</sup>

A delegation of the most distinguished Social-Democrats and Labor leaders of Western Europe arrived in Georgia in September 1921. Among the visitors were Vandervelde, Ramsey MacDonald, Huysman, Snowden and Kautsky. In his book Georgia, Kautsky describes the historical backgrounds of the young Republic, its problems, its attainments and shortcomings. He stresses the existence of political freedom in Georgia and describes the efforts of its Social-Democrat government to apply the principles of western democratic socialism to special conditions of this country. Kautsky stated that "the dictatorship of the Moscow tyrants cannot become permanent in Georgia, any more than in Russia itself. The Georgian people have survived many barbarous invasions; they will also survive the devastation of the Red Army, and the horrors of the Extraordinary Commissions. In Russia, and consequently in Georgia, too, democracy must eventually triumph again."<sup>49</sup> Kautsky ends his book with a prophecy: Georgia "still lies crushed and mishandled by its overwhelming opponent, but simultaneously the ideas which inspired it and made it capable of great things are sweeping over the giant empire of its oppressor. Russia will only be able to prosper when it is animated by the spirit that inspired Georgia. This will constitute the revenge of the Social-Democratic Republic of the Caucasus."<sup>50</sup>

#### Georgia as a Part of the USSR

Following Lenin's directives, the new Georgian Communist leaders tried first to win over the people by means of persuasion. They met with a nation-wide passive resistance. Tbilisi workers, reflecting the feelings of Georgian people, demanded free election, self-determination, respect for customs of the land, legalization of all socialist parties and Georgian army. These demands were acceptable to local Bolsheviks but not to Stalin, who called for smashing "the hydra of nationalism" and destroying "all who would not subordinate Georgia's interests to those of the entire Soviet Union."<sup>51</sup>

Stalin proceeded to destroy all remains of the Georgian Menshevik party. He and Orjonikidze used Cheka to intimidate, torture and destroy all potential enemies of the Bolsheviks. These excesses

committed by the Cheka and the Soviet occupation troops resulted in guerilla warfare in several regions and led to an abortive insurrection of 1924, which was crushed and followed by cruel reprisals.<sup>52</sup>

During the period of NEP (New Economic Policy), Georgia started to recover from the ravages of war and post-war period. Private enterprise in commerce and agriculture was tolerated. Though the entire land was nationalized, peasants enjoyed their own land. Industry started to develop with its concomitant rise in urban population. The shortages of cheap food and raw materials developed. The peasants were reluctant to deliver their products at low government-controlled prices. Over-all agricultural production also declined because the small holdings were less productive than large estates of the pre-reform period.<sup>53</sup>

During the first Five-Year Plan (1928-1932), the full-scale collectivization of agriculture started on a nation-wide front. Georgian Communist leadership followed the Russian example. Communist campaign has little success in Georgia. Not only kulaks, but all individual small-holders resisted collectivization. The government responded by declaring the war against the kulaks. Governmental decree ordered dispossession and removal of kulaks from their land, and subjected them to public trials, deportation and forced labor. Since no objective definition of a kulak existed, most of the victims were poor small land holders. Desperate resistance of peasantry was recorded all over the Soviet Union, especially in Ukraine. Masses of "kulaks" were dispossessed, deported or destroyed, while many peasants who remained burned crops, smashed their tools and slaughtered their cattle.<sup>54</sup>

To cover up his own responsibility for the cruelties of the collectivization, Stalin issued a slogan: "Dizziness with success" which served the purpose of blaming the over-zealous local communist functionaries for the inhuman excesses of the program, and demanded to slow down the collectivization efforts. It took a long time for the Georgian agriculture to recover from the chaotic conditions of this period.<sup>55</sup>

To consolidate his control over Georgia, Stalin assigned to Lavrenti Beria the task of purging this land from all potential enemies of the regime. This was a period of the great purge (1936-37) directed by the NKVD chiefs, Yezhov and Yagoda. While his superiors were busy "liquidating" millions of army officers, party officials, intellectuals and ordinary people throughout the Soviet Union, Beria set for himself a goal of eliminating in the Caucasus of "every individual whose adherence to the Party Line could be called in question or whose survival might conceivably challenge the myth of Stalin's infallibility."<sup>56</sup>

Before these purges, Tbilisi was well known for "the high level of culture of the leading section of society - an active intellectual life which, by then, was rarely to be found elsewhere."<sup>57</sup> The elite among the Georgian intelligentsia was either eliminated or demoralized by the purge. These events caused stagnation in Georgian literature which lasted for about fifteen years. The writers, to survive, were forced to write "dithyrambs about life in factories or on collective farms or sycophantic odes to Stalin the superman."<sup>58</sup> In 1938, Beria succeeded Yezhov and Yagoda as the head of NKVD, while his two former superiors were liquidated by their own terror machine.<sup>59</sup>

During the World War II, the Georgians contributed greatly to the defense of the Soviet Union and prevented Germans from penetrating into Georgia from their North Caucasian bases. When German paratroops were dropped over Georgia, they were quickly mopped up by the local defense units. The Germans attempted to form a Georgian Legion from Georgian refugees and Soviet prisoners of war of Georgian descent. Some highly paced German Nazis wanted to exterminate Georgians believing them to be non-Aryans. But they were saved by the testimony of the Georgian scholar Alexander Nikuradze who was highly respected by Germans. After the World War II, thousands of Georgians who have sought asylum in the West, were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Russia and were subsequently either shot or sent to Siberia.<sup>60</sup>

After a successful completion of the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1946-1950), Georgia again fell into disfavor with Stalin. This time the dictator discovered evidence of an alleged Georgian secret nationalistic organization "whose objective was the liquidation of Soviet power in that republic with the help of imperialist powers." The evidence rested on the falsified documents. Yet thousands of innocent persons became victims of the terror. In April 1952, Beria came from Moscow to attend a meeting of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party. He reprimanded the party leadership for its failure to eradicate all traces of local nationalism in Georgia. After that the organization of the Georgian Communist Party was again thoroughly purged.<sup>61</sup>

After Stalin's death, Beria's iron grip on Georgia weakened. He himself soon lost his position, was condemned to death for high treason, and executed. Many other high officials whose careers were connected with Beria were arrested, tried and put to death for conspiring "to liquidate the Soviet workers' and peasants' regime with the aim of restoring capitalism and the power of the bourgeoisie."<sup>62</sup>

Though Stalin caused much suffering to his own native land, many Georgians seem to respect his memory. He is for many of his



compatriots "the great son of the Georgian nation," perhaps not unlike Napoleon I for Frenchmen. The Tbilisi riots in March 1956, resulted from popular sentiments which was inflamed by Khrushchev's violent denunciation of the late Georgian dictator. During the disorders many "illegal and forbidden nationalist slogans" were shouted by the rioters. This incident, however, should not lead to exaggerated conclusions as to the strength of Georgian nationalism. It is true that Georgians are proud of their nation and its historical past and they, at times, exhibit cantankerous attitudes toward Russians from whom they suffered many injuries in the past. But this does not necessarily mean that Georgians are "forever hatching plots against the Soviet Union."<sup>63</sup>

For about nineteen years since the death of Stalin, Georgia seemingly was not bothered much by the Soviet government. However, in 1972, this relatively small republic has hit the headlines of the world press when the Kremlin's rulers reprimanded her for being one of the least efficient and probably the most corrupt of the fifteen Union Republics of the Soviet Union. In 1972, Georgia came in fifteenth and last place in her production performance, despite being one of the most richly endowed parts of the USSR. In this year, Georgian factories were operating at only seventy percent of capacity and Georgia's rate of growth reached only 2.2 percent as contrasted with six percent target growth set by the plan. This was accompanied with a charge of a huge volume of illegal activities involving government and party officials as well as the common people. Large amounts of funds were used for private gains at the expense of the State and the people.<sup>64</sup>

In the summer of 1972, Vasily Mzhavanadze, the first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, was replaced by Eduard Shevarnadze, a dedicated and determined communist respected for his toughness. The proceedings of the joint party and government plenary meeting in November 1972 reveal that, "Serious mistakes have been made in economic management from which the republic's economy has suffered great losses." The report is also directed at agricultural officials who always blame their low production level on natural forces and on anything else but mismanagement and graft.<sup>65</sup>

Already in 1916, Lenin, speaking on the topic of national self-determination, explained that "the aim of socialism is the elimination of the fragmentation of humanity in petty states and the individualism of nations, not only the coming closer of nations to each other, but their merger or fusion."<sup>66</sup>

Until 1917, Lenin did not believe in dividing Russia up into national entities and reorganizing Russia on a federal basis. The appearance of independent national states on the borders of the Russian empire forced him to accept the principles of national self-determination and national-territorial autonomy.<sup>67</sup>

That acceptance by Lenin of the principle of national self-determination was just a part of his grand strategy is revealed in the discrepancy between his statement that: "the proletariat cannot support any strengthening of nationalism; on the contrary, it supports everything which helps to efface national differences and bring down national barriers, everything which makes ties between nationalities closer and closer;"<sup>68</sup> and the Principles proclaimed at the Tenth Congress (1921), "It is the Party's task to help the toiling masses in the non-Russian nations to overtake Central Russia, which has forged ahead, and (a) to develop and strengthen among themselves forms of the Soviet system corresponding to their national way of life; (b) to develop and strengthen a functional national language, courts, administrative and economic organs, and governmental bodies composed of the indigenous population; (c) to develop among themselves a press, school and a theater . . . in their native language."<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Lenin and his followers explicitly stated that the question of national self-determination was for them a matter of tactics, a part of a strategic purpose of attaining "the dictatorship of the Proletariat."<sup>70</sup>

A careful analysis of the Soviet strategy involving nationality problems reveals that it proceeded in three stages. The first stage was accepted in 1920's. At this stage the need to speed up economic and cultural development of non-Russian nations to transform them into industrial states was stressed. The party officials were instructed to modify their tactics in accordance with local conditions. The policy of the Imperial Russia was condemned as reactionary and the struggle against autocracy for national liberation was praised. The "great power chauvinism" was declared a principal enemy of nationality policy.<sup>71</sup>

The second stage, which started at the beginning of the 1930's, was a virtual reversal of the first stage policy. Now the principal danger was local nationalism and the threat of the great power chauvinism was forgotten. The policy of appointing the indigenous cadres to important government and party positions in the non-Russian republics, called *korenizatsia*, was abandoned in Caucasus, Turkestan, Tataria, the Ukraine and Belorussia. The national liberation struggle of the subjugated nations against tsarism was now proclaimed "reactionary", while the aggressive policy of Imperial Russia was rehabilitated and called "progressive." The Russians were called "elderly brothers." This new line coincided with a stimulation of patriotic feelings which reached their culmination during and after the World War II.<sup>72</sup> At the Kremlin victory banquet, Stalin referred to the Russians as the "leading nation in the USSR."<sup>73</sup>

The third stage was a program laid down in the 1961 Party Program and is now in progress. It is marked by an acceleration in the

"internationalization" of the non-Russian Soviet republics and speaks of growing together of all nations of the Soviet Union and the "achievement of their complete unity."<sup>74</sup> The Soviet rulers have never taken seriously the "sovereignty" of their national minorities. They never intended to make them self-governing. But they perfectly succeeded in creating a form of "pseudo-sovereignty" containing "all the external trappings of true sovereignty" like parliament, governmental offices, the right to formulate policies, to possess armed forces and even the right of succession from the USSR. All of this is, in actual practice, a fiction and, like the Soviet Constitution itself, "only a specious disguise for a centralist, one party absolutism."<sup>75</sup> As Lenin once said: "We must know and remember that the whole Constitution of the Soviet Russia in law and in practice is based upon the fact that the Party corrects, prescribes, and builds everything according to a single principle."<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kremlin's rulers continue their policy of assimilation or "internationalization" of non-Russian peoples within their domain. The proper term for this policy is "denationalization." In official Soviet terms, "mutual assimilation of nations denationalizes national and territorial autonomy and even Union republics, in this respect, too, bringing Soviet society closer to the point at which a complete political and legal merger of nations will become a matter of the foreseeable future."<sup>77</sup>

The official theoreticians also claim that a "new and unprecedented historical community of people" has been created, the "Soviet people" . . . "a synthesis, a combination of a number of nations and nationalities bound together by a unity of aim and interest . . . by a community of motherland, territory and socialist culture, and by a common language serving for intercourse between the nations."<sup>78</sup>

Stalin defined nation as "a historically formed community of people which has grown up on the basis of a community of language, territory, economic life and mentality, the latter manifesting itself in a community of culture."<sup>79</sup> Georgia fits this definition and deserves a status of a nation. Georgia has a status of a Union Republic within the USSR. Her nationhood is officially recognized and she has, according to the Soviet Constitution, the right of secession.

#### A Concluding Note

Suppose this right were not a mockery but a reality. Assume, furthermore that the Georgians were offered three alternatives:

(1) complete denationalization and transformation into the "Soviet people"; (2) preservation of a genuine nationhood within the Soviet Union; and (3) completely independent national state of Georgia. How would the Georgians choose?

A scholar dealing with this question can use at least two approaches. He can develop a complex study of Georgia's own interests expressed in terms of a cost-benefit analysis involving economic, political, military-strategic, ideological and other factors. Or he can engage in socio-psychological speculations of how would Georgians vote themselves if given a chance to solve the problem by a plebiscite. At the present state of affairs both methods would seem to be purely academic exercises in futility. Yet, if Lengyel is right, and nationalism proves to be a last stage of communism, the question of national self-determination in general and of Georgian nationhood in particular, should be considered a matter of utmost importance.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Bertram D. Wolfe, Marxism, The Dial Press, Inc., 1967, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>4</sup>Emil Lengyel, Nationalism - The Last Stage of Communism, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969.

<sup>5</sup>Bertram D. Wolfe, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>6</sup>Friedrich Engels in the Neue Rheinische Zeitung, January 13, 1849.

<sup>7</sup>David Marshall Lang, A Modern History of Soviet Georgia, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962, p. 108.

<sup>8</sup>Friedrich Engels, Article in Commonwealth, 1886.

<sup>9</sup>KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, 7th Ed., Part I, Moscow, 1953, p. 559.

<sup>10</sup>David Marshall Land, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>11</sup>Ia. S. Gogebashvili, Izbrannye pedagogicheskie sochineniya, Moscow, 1954, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., pp. 42-93.

- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 93.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 99.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 103.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 106.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 107.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 115.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 109-110 and p. 122.
- <sup>20</sup>Ilia Chavchavadze, Tkhzulebata sruli krebuli, Vol. VI, Tbilisi, 1956, p. 242.
- <sup>21</sup>Noe Zhordania, "Economic Progress and the National Question," paper presented in Tbilisi, February 1893.
- <sup>22</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., p. 127.
- <sup>23</sup>S. Maghlakelidze and A. Iovidze, Ed., Revolutsiya 1905-1907 gg. v Gruzii. Sbornik dokumentov, Tbilisi, 1956, pp. 88-89.
- <sup>24</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., p. 148.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 160.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-71.
- <sup>27</sup>Noe Zhordania, Chemi dsarsuli, Mogonebani, Paris, 1953, pp. 78-79.
- <sup>28</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., pp. 177-178.
- <sup>29</sup>Firuz Kazemzadeh, The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917-1920, New York: Oxford, 1951, p. 34.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 37.
- <sup>31</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., pp. 196-198.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 199.
- <sup>33</sup>Firuz Kazemzadeh, op. cit., p. 34.
- <sup>34</sup>Dokumenty i Materialy, Tiflis, 1919, pp. 336-8.

- <sup>35</sup>Edward Hallett Carr, The Bolshevnik Revolution 1917-1923, Vol. I, Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1969, p. 347.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 349-50.
- <sup>37</sup>M. D. Bagirov, Iz Istorii Bol'shevistskoi Organizatsii v Baku i Azerbaidzhane, 1946, pp. 193-198.
- <sup>38</sup>B. A. Bor'yan, Armeniya, Mezhdunarodnaya Diplomatiya i SSR, Vol. II, pp. 122-3.
- <sup>39</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., p. 224.
- <sup>40</sup>Firuz Kazemzadeh, op. cit., p. 295.
- <sup>41</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., p. 226.
- <sup>42</sup>Klyuchnikov i Sabanin, Mezhdunarodnaya Politika, Vol. III, 1928, pp. i, 86-7, 91.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 237.
- <sup>44</sup>L. Trotzki, Die Grundfragen der Revolution, Hamburg, Verlag der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1923, pp. 342-349.
- <sup>45</sup>E. Drabkina, Gruzinskaya kontrrevolyutsiya, Leningrad, 1928, cited by Firuz Kazemzadeh, op. cit., p. 189.
- <sup>46</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., pp. 211-213.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 210.
- <sup>48</sup>Edward Hallett Carr, op. cit., p. 352.
- <sup>49</sup>Karl Kautsky, Georgia: A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic, H. J. Stenning, transl., London: International Bookshops, Ltd., 1921, p. 9.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-112.
- <sup>51</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., pp. 238-239.
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 243.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 246.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 247-250.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 251-252.

- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 254.
- <sup>57</sup>Boris Pasternak, An Essay in Autobiography, London, 1959, p. 111.
- <sup>58</sup>David Marshall Lang, op. cit., p. 257.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 258.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 259-260.
- <sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 260-261.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 263-264.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 265.
- <sup>64</sup>Christopher Ogden, "The Kremlin Cracks Down on a Maverick," Saturday Review, April 6, 1974, pp. 17-19.
- <sup>65</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup>V. I. Lenin, Sochineniya, Vol. XXII, p. 135.
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- <sup>69</sup>KPSS v Resolyutskiyakh, 7th Ed. Part I, Moscow, 1953, p. 559.
- <sup>70</sup>I. V. Stalin, Voprosy leninisma, Moscow, 1947, pp. 47-48; V. I. Lenin, Sochineniya, 3rd Ed., Vol. XIX, Moscow, 1931, pp. 257-58.
- <sup>71</sup>Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, "Denationalization of the Soviet Ethnic Minorities," Studies on the Soviet Union, Vol. IV, No. 1, 1964, Munich, Germany: Institute for the Study of the USSR, p. 76.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>73</sup>I. V. Stalin, O Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne Sovetskogo Soyuza, Moscow, 1952, p. 191.
- <sup>74</sup>Programma KPSS, Moscow, 1961, pp. 112-113.
- <sup>75</sup>Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, op. cit., p. 77.
- <sup>76</sup>V. I. Lenin, Sochineniya, 4th Ed., Vol. XXII, Moscow, 1952, pp. 135-136.

<sup>77</sup>Sovetskoye gosudarstvo i pravo, 1961, no. 12, p. 25.

<sup>78</sup>Osnovy nauchnogo kommunizma, Moscow, 1966, pp. 444-445.

<sup>79</sup>I. V. Stalin, Marxizm i natsionalny vopros, Moscow, 1950, pp. 22-24.





DEPARTMENT OF STATE

February 6, 1980


Mr. Harry Schreengost  
Defense Technical Information  
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