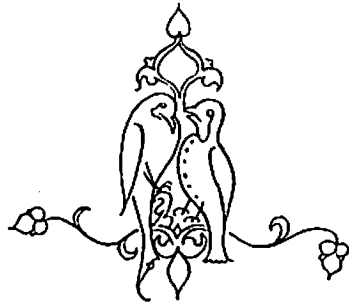


# THE ARMENIAN REVIEW

AUTUMN, SEPTEMBER, 1963

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Part I & II

# the ARMENIAN Review

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## An Appraisal of the Communist Formula 'National in Form, Socialist in Content' With Particular Reference to Soviet Armenia

VAHAKN N. DADRAN

### I The Theoretical Dimensions of the Problem

More than 3 decades have elapsed since Stalin for the first time introduced and in his own manner elaborated on this slogan.<sup>1</sup> The particular circumstances under which it was contrived constitute in themselves a valuable topic for exploration—particularly from the point of view of struggle for power and consolidation in the top

echelons of the revolutionary communist leadership.

The present article seeks to examine the actual validity of the formula in the light of Soviet developments of 3 decades and with particular reference to Soviet Armenia.

Special attention is to be focused on the broad ramifications which the formula entailed and which were not intended or anticipated by its contrivers and executors.

Consistent with a then emerging and now solidified pattern of reference to Len-

<sup>1</sup>Political Report to the 16th Congress of CPSU in 1930.

in ideological disputes or claims, Stalin designated his theory allied with this formula as "the Leninist presentation of the question of national cultures."<sup>2</sup>

Actually, Lenin's contribution was indirect and stemmed mainly from his adamant insistence that national languages be preserved and even cultivated. This attitude was not so much a reflection of a penchant for a multitude of colorful languages. Nor was it necessarily an index of appreciating diverse cultures. Rather, it was first due to a negative reaction.

His aversion to what he termed "Great Russian Chauvinism" bordered on truculence.

"As soon as I have got rid of this damned bad tooth, I will start a life and death struggle against Great Russian Chauvinism. I will devour it with all my sound teeth."<sup>3</sup>

Stalin cleverly emulated this attitude. "Great Russian Chauvinism is a most dangerous enemy, which we must overcome . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Lenin felt that the cumulative Tsarist legacy of oppression had created massive and resistant inertia among the nationalities affected. He attributed the growth of nationalism among the latter to this legacy.

"Tsarist brutal-militarist nationalism was followed by the activities of bourgeois nationalism in its Armenian (and other) variations."<sup>5</sup> And Stalin again echoed him with special emphasis. ". . . once we over-

<sup>2</sup>Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 12, p. 379.

<sup>3</sup>Lenin, Moscow's Marx Engels Institute, Published in London. No date. Probably printed in 1942. p. 181.

<sup>4</sup>Op. cit. Vol. 5, p. 254.

<sup>5</sup>Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 19, Erevan, 1950, p. 299. The designation Erevan indicates throughout this paper that the work referred to is originally written in Armenian but for purposes of convenience appears here in English translation.

come it, we shall overcome nine-tenths of the nationalism which has survived and which is growing in certain republics."<sup>6</sup>

A by-product of this attitude of Lenin and consequently of Stalin was the realization that in the realm of culture, whenever possible and feasible, compulsion should be avoided. He therefore placed a high premium upon voluntariness. Referring to the importance of learning Russian, he postulated.

"Transcaucasian nationalities voluntarily seek out Russian as a language of instruction such as in Armenian parochial schools where Russian is not compulsory."<sup>7</sup>

When his Armenian lieutenant in the Caucasus, Shaumian, wrote to him urging the introduction of Russian as a state language,<sup>8</sup> Lenin scolded him for not grasping the import of the psychological moment in *voluntary* learning and charged him with a penchant for *Königlich Preussischer Sozialismus*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Op. cit., Vol. 5, p. 268.

<sup>7</sup>Op. cit., Vol. 20, p. 4. In making this assertion, he resorted to statistical compilations and comparative analysis of population figures. He referred to Switzerland where, as he stressed 3 languages were used and no coercion existed, even though the German contingent of the population was 70 percent. He attributed this lack of coercion to the sway of "democracy and civilization." Then he argued that Greater Russia comprises only 43 percent of the total population whereas "the strangers or aliens constitute 57 percent on the border regions," and as such is a minority. He therefore rejected the need of Russian as a common language adding sarcastically that after all "colossal Russia" is much less "civilized" compared to "little Switzerland." *Ibid* pp. 5, 6, 7.

<sup>8</sup>Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 19, Erevan, p. 623.

<sup>9</sup>In his reply, Shaumian explained that his proposal did not preclude Lenin's idea at all and reiterated the proposal he made to the Transcaucasians that they adopt Russian as an official language for the transaction of official business; he felt that such a recommendation

As previously, Lenin was convinced that the economic conditions would press the spread of Russian as a concomitant of evolving industrialism, but, he was sensitive to the role of languages, alert to the encroachments of Russian nationalism and also averse to the idea of compulsory Russian.

In brief, Lenin's deference to nationality feelings regarding culture and particularly language was not an end in itself but a vehicle to win the nationalities over in order to facilitate their ultimate absorption into the fabric of an evolving Soviet nation. For this reason, it was necessary to devise a context in which both the desiderata of the nationalities and the interests of communism could be harmoniously blended.

Since the interests of communism had undisputed priority however, this fusion had to be schemed in a correspondingly appropriate fashion. It had to have a clear appeal to nationality sentiments but essentially and in the last resort it had to promote the rise of transnational sentiments at the expense of national ones. Lenin did not have a chance to try to master this in itself nearly impossible task. It devolved upon Stalin to grapple with it. When he finally came up with the formula described in the title of this article, he evinced an ingenuity, the superficiality of which was exceeded only by the confusion and hazards it foreshadowed. Trotzky called this trait "a psychological and stylistic primitiveness (so) typical of Stalin."<sup>10</sup>

What is of interest for the present article is the relevance of this formula. Since it is still a prevalent catchword purporting

would be gladly and voluntarily accepted. He then made the countercharge that Lenin was acting like "An ascetic Great Russian" himself. Shaumian, S., *Letters*, Erevan, 1959, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup>Trotzky, L. *Stalin*, New York, 1941, p. 48

to provide the necessary framework for the reconciliation of national and communist ends, the disclaimer of other Stalinist principles notwithstanding, its critical examination is a vital link in the chain of approaches to the Soviet nationality problem.

The main difficulty, if not impossibility, of the formula is implicit in the basic antagonism which separates communism from nationalism. (Since the Soviet usage of the term "Socialism" denotes the idea of a stepping stone to communism, it is presently held to be coterminous with communism.)

No degree of cleverness, acumen, rationalizations or any other type of intellectual persuasiveness can overcome this gap, this mutual exclusiveness. Pitted against this objective fact of first magnitude are the subjective attitudes, beliefs, and even self-deceptions of the communist leaders seeking to implement the formula. Stalin himself offered a sample of this attitude when he declared: "National cultures must be allowed to develop and unfold, to reveal all their potentialities in order to create the conditions for merging them into one common culture with one common language."<sup>11</sup>

The question which arises is how is this in accord with the slogan "Socialist in content." If a culture must be allowed to develop fully, is it feasible to inject into this process of authentic growth elements which are foreign, artificial and therefore incompatible—above all, when the injection is compulsory?

In most cultures, religion played a key role in providing a psychological framework, originating cultural values and edifices marking the authenticity of a culture, for example. Socialism or Communism is

<sup>11</sup>Works, Vol. 12, p. 379.

not only incompatible with the spirit of religion but is openly and vehemently hostile to it. Particularly in the case of Armenia, the Church, the Holy See and the multitude of generations of Armenian clergymen, proved the undisputed pillars of Armenian culture, imparting to it all the aesthetic peculiarities which signalize the marvels of Armenian sacred culture.<sup>12</sup>

Stalin's faith in the correctness, feasibility and highly useful quality of the formula was matched by the degree of importance he attached to the problem and of determination with which he set forth to solve it. As he predicted, the formula was: "to enable the Bolsheviks to capture the most impregnable fortress in the sphere of nationality question."<sup>13</sup>

This approach of Stalin embodied in itself all the pitfalls which threatened the lesser captains and lieutenants of the Communist leadership. Availing himself of all the resources provided by the autocratic and dictatorial powers of the system, he held the Damokles Sword over the heads of those nationality leaders who were recruited to apply fruitfully the formula, but who displayed ambivalence or uncertainty concerning the domains and modes of application.

His question "How is it possible to confuse these two fundamentally different things without breaking with Marxism?"<sup>14</sup> was followed by an ominously portentous warning: "Anyone who fails to understand this dialectics . . . is dead as far

<sup>12</sup>One such marvel is the Holy Mass created by the celibate priest Komitas. Among renowned composers, Verdi and Debussy acclaimed the polyphonic grandeur of Armenian sacred music but even today, the Central Committee is dead opposed to the performance and recording of this masterpiece by the well trained and equipped Armenian State chorus in Erevan.

<sup>13</sup>*Works*, Vol. 12, p. 381.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid*, p. 380.

as Marxism is concerned."<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the greatest liability of the formula is inherent in the regime for the benefit of which it was contrived. The adamant refusal of Stalin as well as of the subsequent "collective" leadership to allow a genuine critical appraisal of the limitations, confusions and inner contradictions of the formula, inevitably pre-empted its abortive results keynoted by the continuous tensions, purges and occasional nationalist outbursts on the part of the nationalities.

An important factor for the miscarriage of the Stalinist formula of "national in form, Socialist in content" resides in the formula itself. First of all, like all formulas it is inadequate to cover the many realities denoted and connoted by it.

On a more specific plane, the formula suffers from a number of inadequacies nullifying its prospects of fulfillment. Foremost among these inadequacies is the illogical basis of the formula. This illogicality derives from the misplaced relationships between the ideas of "form" and "content" on the one hand, and those of "national" and "socialist" on the other.

Indeed, one should emphasize the cardinal fact, neglected by the Communists, that everything which is "national" touches on emotions—particularly for formerly or currently oppressed nationalities. For this reason, matters which are "national" cannot be confined to mere forms. They more often than not involve substance by way of emotions, mostly of irrational character.

The quality of substance is obtained through the fact of accumulation of centuries of historical ethnic experiences and the keen awareness of them. Lenin was quite conscious of this factor when he declared: "In the solution of each and every

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*, p. 380.

socialist problem, it is an absolute condition of Marxist theory to place such problems in certain historical perspectives."<sup>16</sup>

Two years later, in a letter to I. Armand in Nov. 1916, Lenin asserted furthermore that: "The whole spirit of Marxism, its entire system requires that each thesis be considered in a historical context . . . and only in light of concrete historical experiences."<sup>17</sup>

In this sense, things "national" are not only frequently of irrational substance but also tend to be pervasive in force of unfolding.

An additional liability of the formula is its peculiar vagueness which easily leads itself to broad latitudes of interpretation and even clever exploitation for opposite ends. The entire field of Armenian cultural developments highlighting motives and variations of national pathos in arts, literature and music, illustrate this point.

Underlying all these inadequacies and liabilities is the failure of Lenin and his followers to recognize a few cardinal facts affecting the nationalities of the Soviet Union. One of them refers to the historical trend of national emancipation and the need for a period of independence and sovereignty on part of nationalities afflicted with past or present oppression.

This period of national self-fulfillment without outside encroachments is a contemporary imperative before such nationalities may eventually be ready to be embraced in a supra-national body-politic-voluntarily and not by compulsion, in the context of freedom and not dictatorship.

## II

### Nationalism in "Socialist" Armenia

When considered against the background of the totality of the Soviet Union, Armenia, as a member republic of that Union, involves some notable peculiarities. On an objective plane, she occupies only

0.13 percent of the territory of the Union and constitutes only 0.84 percent of the total population of that Union.<sup>18</sup>

However, from the point of view of industrial production her position assumes disproportionate significance. Taking 1940 as a base year, for example, in 1958 the combined rate of growth in machine industry and metallurgy in Armenia was 31 times higher than in 1940 as compared to 6 times higher in the whole Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> A more or less similar ratio is obtained with respect to the total output of electrical energy. Taking 1913 as a base year, the entire Soviet Union generated 25 times more electricity in 1940 and 136 times more in 1959, whereas the rates for Armenia are 78 and 531, respectively.<sup>20</sup>

The following fact may offer some explanation for these unusual margins of accomplishment. Taking the number of University, Polytechnical and other Institute graduates per thousand of the population, Soviet Armenia ranks second in the whole of Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup>

The picture may be rounded up with a reference to an official communist assessment of Armenia as a historical legacy. In commenting on her past and on her current contributions to the progress of the Soviet Union about 7 months before the

<sup>16</sup>*a* Op. cit. Vol. 20, Erevan, 1950, pp. 498-499.

<sup>16</sup>*b* Op. cit. Vol. 35, Erevan, 1952; p. 265.

<sup>18</sup>Marouchian, A. H., *The Economic Growth of S. Armenia, 1920-1960* Erevan, 1960, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup>Vermishef, G., "Machine Industry and Metallurgy," *Ibid*, p. 126.

<sup>19</sup>Tchraghatzbanian, A. "Electrical Energy," *Ibid*, p. 88. This collective enterprise by members of the Armenian Academy abounds with statistical data in support of specific claims for industrial and economic, scientific and educational achievements of impressive magnitude.

<sup>20</sup>Report of the Central Census Bureau of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., quoted in *Soviet Armenia*, Erevan, Feb. 4, 1960.

Nazi invasion of Russia, *Izvestia*, together with *Pravda*, editorially characterized her as: "The most ancient people (of the Soviet Union) endowed with an equally ancient civilization, and a sublime culture."<sup>20</sup>

This configuration of facts becomes accentuated by the importance the Soviets have thus far attached to the Armenians as a particular case. Of all the non-Slavic constituent nationalities of the Soviet Union, the latter have namely the largest representations in the free world—approximately 1 million. From the point of view of propaganda and influence this is a signal factor for consideration for the communists in their attitudes vis a vis Soviet Armenia.

The net meaning of this account is that Armenia has most successfully integrated itself into the web of Soviet industrial growth. The question arises whether or not this process of integration has been accompanied by a corresponding degree of assimilation into the currents of Soviet Socialism to the detriment of Armenian national sentiments.

Obviously, the answer to this question can neither be exhaustive nor entirely documentary. The very nature of the subject precludes the acquisition of full scale data for purposes of demonstration. But, available evidence, however incomplete, still warrants an attempt to provide an answer.

A considerable portion of this evidence is yielded by the recent period of relaxa-

<sup>20</sup>*Izvestia* (also *Pravda*) Nov. 24, 1940, quoted in *Soviet Armenia*, Erevan, Nov. 25, 1940. Two years later, likewise, a Soviet official is reported to have proclaimed: "The only fully pro-Soviet people in the Caucasus, the only truly loyal people are the Armenians." Alexander Werth, *The Year of Stalingrad*, London, 1946, p. 153. The official was Konstantin Umanski, a high ranking Communist of the secret police, who later died under mysterious circumstances while Ambassador to Mexico.

tion of severe punitive measures against discontented citizens of the regime, by the accentuation of public self-criticisms concerning communist shortcomings and communist villains and by the relative intensification of touristic contacts involving a multitude of non-Soviet and Soviet Armenians. The weight of the evidence is also enhanced by the anti-Stalinist mood of exposure of the scope, victims and methods of the Great-Purge of 1936-1938 through recent pertinent Soviet revelations.

A careful scrutiny of all this material suggests that nationalism in "Socialist" Armenia is a very live force in spite of and perhaps also because of the magnitude of purges and victims inflicted upon her by the communist regime.

Even though one may discern within S. Armenia itself a number of variations of such a nationalism, the common denominator for all of these seems to be a keen national consciousness transcending all the hollow Socialist confines insisted upon by the communists. It is of signal importance to note in this respect that at times "Socialism" seems to be a factor not reducing but rather promoting nationalism. In the field of sciences, arts, industry and education, for instance, the achievements of S. Armenia as a unit, as well as those of individual Armenians working and creating outside Armenia, notably in Tiflis, Baku and Moscow, are a powerful impetus to Armenian national sentiment. Here, paradoxically, the communist regime and its formal appendage "Socialist culture" are functioning as a leverage, as frames of reference to propel

<sup>21</sup>This is an instance of the vagaries, of the curious paths through which cumulative but oppressed national sentiment seeks the indispensable outlets to vindicate its *raison d'être* as an abiding contemporary force.

Armenian<sup>21</sup> national pride and thereby Armenian nationalism.

For nationalities maintaining a high level of population homogeneity, this brand of nationalism, i.e., national pride in industrial and other allied achievements afforded through "Socialist Culture," is perhaps the most signal phenomenon—unintended and unanticipated by the dogmatic architects of communism. It is a phenomenon that may be portentous for eventual formation of a new cluster of types of nationalism reflecting the relative potentialities of industrial progress and at the same time keynoting the Soviet factor.

And, of all the nationalities of the Soviet Union, Soviet Armenia has the highest degree of homogeneity, i.e. nearly 90 percent of its population are Armenians. For this reason, the critical confrontation between the forces of communism and nationalism has undergone and is still undergoing its severest tests in this compact, little country in the Caucasus. There are additional reasons for the unusual severity of the test. One paramount reason is the fact that of all the nationalities of the S. Union, the Armenians have the longest and thorniest record of persecution and massacre on account of their ethnic solidarity and self-assertiveness. The practical consequence of this historically recurrent pattern of ethnic experience has been the development of a tenacity, of an inveterate urge to survive and to persist as a national unit. More importantly, to succeed in this respect, the Armenians have forged manifold aptitudes and psychological resources which were tested time and again in the agonizing crucible of unremitting foreign yokes.

Four major episodes in the history of Soviet Armenia in particular and the Soviet Union as a whole in general, dramati-

ally reveal the preponderance of emotion in matters national, even though such emotions may temporarily be submerged in the streams of prudence, patience and pretense of Soviet Socialism. They epitomize at the same time the force of latent readiness with which national emotions at appropriate or convenient moments erupt to eclipse everything connected with "Socialism."

The First Episode reached its climax in the sweeping purges of 1936 and 1937 which as far as the intelligentsia was concerned, claimed the lives of 3000 Armenians, mostly communists, prominent in the Party, Arts, Sciences, Industry and Education. The larger part of this group had vainly and surreptitiously tried to reconcile national sentiments with the mandates of communism. Particularly the writers in their works had allowed themselves unusual latitude of interpretation provided by the vagueness of the Stalinist formula. The formula described in the title was purportedly amplified by the introduction of a new slogan, i.e. "The popular basis of literature." Here again, socialism was meant to denote "the people," and "socialist content" was to convey the dreams and aspirations of the common people. But, who were the people? The heroes of the truly popular Armenian writer, A. Bakountz, a former Dashnak, who solemnly renounced his membership in the then expelled Party and more solemnly enrolled in the ranks of the Communist Party, were common folks—workers, peasants, shepherds etc. In articulating their dreams, aspirations and needs, Bakountz dramatized the resilient forces of love for one's fatherland and nation, and thereby immortalized himself. But his mortal remains are a grim reminder of the tragic fate that may befall any Soviet artist or intellectual remaining close to the

people and daring to air their genuine feelings. As Stalin so aptly predicted and then lived up to his own prediction. "Anyone who fails to understand the dialectics (implied by the formula of national in form, Socialist in content) is dead as far as Marxism is concerned." (See page 6, footnote 15.)

This era of inflicted deaths upon prominently popular intellectuals reached its climax in the tortuous death of Y. Charentz, perhaps the greatest Soviet Armenian poet. He too was initially an ardent Communist who so desperately tried to reconcile the principles of Communism with his pathos for Armenia which he so cherished and loved and for which he bravely fought as a teen-age volunteer in World War I.

But he gradually and irrevocably became disillusioned with what he regarded the phony pretenses and claims of Communism. He no longer believed that the salvation of Armenia was ensured by the Soviet regime. His keen disappointment he sublimated in a famous poem called Message, through which he conveyed a hidden message to his people in the form of an acrostic, which could be obtained by reading the second letter of each line and which read: "Oh, Armenian people, your only salvation is possible through your union and the strength flowing from it." He was subsequently arrested, tortured and killed in 1937. Even though he has since been reinstated as a distinguished Communist poet, particularly on account of his early poems glorifying Lenin, he is exalted by Armenians within and without Soviet Armenia as a nationalist poet and his poem "My sweet Armenia . . ." for multitudes of Armenians has the force of a Lord's prayer.

The Second Episode dates from the invasion of the Soviet Union by the German

Wehrmacht. The expedient stirring up of patriotism among the peoples and nationalities of the Soviet Union by the Communist authorities served as a boon for Armenian nationalists. Repressed feelings for Armenia were suddenly released, and utilizing the inclusive slogan "fatherland" all sorts of incantations, evocations of past glories, deifications of the outstanding figures of Armenian history, including even some religious apostles and renewed pleas for dedication to and defense of the mother country were the order of the day throughout the War. The emotions reached their highest pitch when Armenian contingents of the Red Army were regrouped to organize distinct Armenian divisions and tank columns which then participated in the conquest of Germany and in the capture of Berlin. Barring the incidence of a minority of fanatic Communists, the bulk of these Armenian warriors were fighting as Armenians and were less concerned with defending the Soviet Union or the regime. Messages, letters, newspaper accounts, inscriptions on the walls of the monuments of captured cities, such as the Reichstag, and even novels written during and after the War reveal two chief motives of fighting. One was the almost desperate need to demonstrate to the whole world that Armenians are not a sheepish people vulnerable to be massacred any time, that they can match and exceed any people in intrepidity, heroism and military distinction. The other was a keen awareness of the fact that the Germans were the Allies of the Turks during World War I and therefore were assumed to have had some responsibility for the execution of the massacre and annihilation of 1.5 million Armenians. Consequently, the burning desire for revenge and a vicarious sense of hatred, in which Turks and Germans were identified, provided the animus

to fight like heroes. This episode was punctuated by the elevation of the fallen and living heroes of the War, among them a marshal, an admiral and approximately 50<sup>22</sup> generals, to the ranks of national idols, symbolizing the bravery and genius not of Soviet citizens or communists but of the Armenian people. Here, the Stalinist formula became totally over-shadowed by the activation of real and pervasive forces of national sentiment, ever ready to surge forth and to manifest itself.

The Third Episode was ushered in by the rise and sway of the anti-Stalinist climate purposefully fostered by the top leadership of the Kremlin.

It coincided with the demonstrative restoration of the scores of fallen victims of Beria and Stalin who overnight became national heroes. Since nearly all of them were accused of bourgeois nationalism and chauvinism, the act of restoration implied some degree of official sanctioning of their general beliefs and attitudes. This fact entailed certain complications for the writers in particular. Since most of them could not be exclusively identified with Communism or Socialism but rather with a general pathos for Armenia in which some distant or immediate affinities for Communism were intertwined with a passion for Armenia, the task of promoting them after their restoration proved cumbersome. The issue was settled by a rather bold act of Mikoyan.

One year after Stalin's death, in a speech in Erevan, he took Armenian Communists to task for banning the works of Raffi and Charentz, among others, who had inflamed the people against "Persian and Turkish oppressors," and had invested them

with a "revolutionary" zeal.<sup>23</sup>

Barely had Mikoyan departed from Erevan, an avalanche of literary activity overtook Armenia. Within a very short time, two consecutive editions of the collected works of Charentz, each involving 25,000 copies were printed and sold out at once.

It should be noted that in initiating the reinstatement of these and other writers, Mikoyan referred to the campaign of the Soviet Union not only against "bourgeois nationalism" but also against "National nihilism"—i.e. anti-national attitudes. He admitted that "nationalist shades" existed in the ranks of these writers, but then he raised the question: "But is it warranted, on the basis of these to renounce the rich cultural heritage of the nation and the heroic struggle of the Armenian people?"<sup>23</sup>

There are three significant points to note here. First, the readiness and enthusiasm with which the Armenians responded. This fact dramatizes once more how an ostensibly "Socialist" nationality is disposed to burst forth with nationalist fervor, when even slightly encouraged to do so. Second, how Mikoyan, ostensibly a de-nationalized fanatic Communist, took advantage of the climate in Moscow of anti-Stalin and anti-Beria moods in the development of which he himself played a key rôle to tacitly give impetus to such sentiments. Third, how the communist formula defining the relationship between "people," "national" and "socialism" lends itself to nationalistic interpretations.

The Fourth Episode is of very recent date and therefore cannot be as fully assessed in terms of its significance and ramifications. It is keynoted by the massive, nation wide celebrations of the 1600th anniversary of the invention of the Armen-

<sup>22</sup>Mikoyan, *A Speech Delivered to the Assembly of the constituents of the Stalin Electoral District, Erevan, 1954* pp. 40, 42.

<sup>23</sup>*Literary Journal*, No. 10, March 1954, Erevan, p. 1-3.

ian Alphabet by Bishop Mashdotz. The celebrations acquired an unusually high degree of import by virtue of the fact that they were instituted and fully supported by a corresponding decree by the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party. The month of May, 1962, was officially designated as the month of festivities to cover every corner of Armenia and to reach their apex in Erevan by the presence of scores of Communist dignitaries invited from Moscow, Baku, Tiflis as well as other Republics. Communist Armenia was taking full advantage of the Leninist policy of appreciation and promotion of nationality languages.<sup>24</sup>

Hence the audacity of the decree, which was surpassed only by the scope and intensity of national sentiments released through the chain reaction of events engulfing Armenia.

As prelude to the main festivity, there were published articles and pamphlets in all sorts of publications, including the organs of the Armenian Communist Party and in which the clerical inventor of the alphabet was elevated to the altar of supreme glory of the Armenian nation.

Many went even so far as to describe him as the Founder of Armenian Culture. Others recognized in him a great scientist, and still others a man of keen political acumen. But most of the writers agreed that were it not for the unique and rich Armenian language and therefore the Alphabet, the nation could have hardly survived the cruel ordeals with which Armenian history is saturated. Hence, through the channels of gratitude and by way of

<sup>24</sup>"It is necessary to set the strictest rules concerning the use of national languages in the national republics . . . and to abide by those rules with special carefulness. *Letters, Lenin's III. Pipes, R. The Formation of the Soviet Union.* Cambridge, 1957 p. 276.

its articulate intellectuals, scientists and scholars, once more Armenia gave vent to its emotions disregarding Socialist culture and admiring the marvels of her own. This mood of exaltation was exceeded in the case of speeches and banquet utterances climaxing the celebrations. Printed words can always prove liabilities in a regime like the Soviet Union. But impromptu speeches which are not recorded, offer broader latitudes for free expressions. As expected, the Soviet Press did hardly dare to print verbatim the statements made in some of the speeches marking the liberating spell of alcohol from inhibition and repression.

Only through reports published in the Armenian Press of the United States by invited writers from America had one to learn, for instance, that upon repeated public demands the popular poet Sheraz came up to the podium and on the spot created a poem asking when Mt. Ararat, the Sacred legacy of Armenia, Ani, the repository of the marvels of medieval Armenian art and the provinces Kars and Ardahan (now all of them part of Turkey) will be returned to Armenia, thereby evoking stormy applause. As some of the writers printed, it was in itself an incredible atmosphere of national intoxication and massive obliviousness to the pitfalls implied by such manifestations. Under these circumstances, it was natural to expect a vehement decrial in the Communist press of such transgressions. The decrial followed immediately in the wake of the celebrations and involved several editorials in *Sovetakan Haynstan*, the Organ of the Armenian Communist Party. It has also been reported that many of the invited guests expressed their dismay and surprise when half jokingly and half seriously they asked whether they were invited to a communist Armenia or to a na-

tionalist Armenia. The signal development of the episode is the fact that the festivities went out of control, in an overwhelming rapture of nationalist exaltations dumbfounding the Communists.

One of the few prominent Communist theoreticians who went along with Lenin in almost every respect but who saw a serious hazard in Lenin's policy of nationality cultures, was A. Miassnigian the "Lenin of the Caucasus." He termed this policy, particularly in the realms of education and mother language as "the Achilles' Heel" of Communism.<sup>25</sup> It is most instructive to note that Lenin and Stalin, blinded by their animosity to what they called "Great Russian Chauvinism" and instances of Tsarist oppression, were unaware of this serious loophole of their system or were not sufficiently appreciative of its liabilities. More than 40 years of Communism has demonstrated time and again that expedient adaptations to Socialism tend to subside quickly and give way to nationalism whenever appropriate opportunities emerge. Culture was to serve as a profitable nexus to first link Communism with nationalism and then to bring about the absorption of the latter by the former. But Lenin and his followers seemed to have miscalculated by underestimating the potent and abiding force of national sentiments which permeate most of the fibres of national cultures and in the Armenian case particularly of language.

To illustrate the intensity with which Armenians cherish their mother tongue, reference may be made to the highly successful and talented lady communist writer, *Sylvia Kapoutikian.* In a most celebrated and equally popular poem, she admonished young Armenians to adore and

to protect Armenian as a priceless treasure and went even so far to declare that even when they should be impelled or compelled to make a choice, they might under circumstances forsake their mothers but never their mother tongue.

Another and far more successful lady communist writer whose extent of distinction is mainly accounted for by the fact that she writes in Russian and resides in Moscow, tried to redeem herself and her inability to use her mother tongue by describing herself as a writer "who uses Russian to write but whose blood is Armenian."<sup>26</sup>

In appraising the import of such utterances, it should be born in mind that they are not made haphazardly, lightheartedly or defiantly. Rather nearly in every instance there is an appropriateness of the moment, a suitable context or a clever combination of items of nationalism and socialism. In such instances, it is incumbent upon the discerning reader to distinguish purport from intent, context from content and lip service from pathos. It seems that only in rare cases does some prominent Soviet intellectual or artist venture to express with minimum caution his views and feelings about delicate issues. The following excerpts from a very recent interview with *Mardiros Sarian*, the Dean of Soviet Armenian painters, the recipient of many decorations, including the Stalin and Lenin Prizes, and venerated throughout the Soviet Union as well as many parts of the world, succinctly epitomize the entire discussion in this part. In answering to D. Moldawsky, the Soviet art critic, who had attributed to him an acquired sense of Armenianism, Sarian retorted, and at the same time debunked the Stalinist formula as follows:

<sup>25</sup>Miassnigian, A. C. *Selected Works*, Erevan, 1957, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup>Selian, B. *The Two Decades of Soviet Armenia*, New York, 1940, p. 92.

"Conditions of external life are not a determinant of art . . . the critic has overlooked a very vital element, namely, the fact that you cannot try to acquire a national sense; this sense is inborn; it grows with you and expresses itself through its own animus." (Then referring to the fact of learning the mother tongue, he said) "My grandchild not only knows Armenian but he is an Armenian . . . and, when participating in (Soviet art life) I too know Armenian, but more importantly, however, I also am an Armenian, and this in a total sense . . . Armenia is for me the life of lives. The natural landscape of my

people's country exalts me, even though there are many other places with similar settings . . . The national characteristics in the conception and design of works of art cannot be cultivated intentionally or by virtue of external purposes. Any such attempt renders art shallow and formal . . . In the realm of art, nothing can be enforced—neither national feelings, nor optimism, nor innovations."<sup>27</sup>

(To be concluded)

<sup>27</sup>Meliksetian, V. "New Year Interview with Mardiros Sarjan," *Soviet Art*, Vol. 1, Erevan, January, 1962, p. 30.

#### ON THE AUTHOR

Dr. Vahakn Dadrian is currently on the staff of the Sociology Department of Boston College where he is teaching courses in two fields: 1. Sociology; 2. Soviet Society, particularly nationalities and minorities. In the past he has written several articles on Armenian Nationalism in German, Armenian and English. Currently he is completing a book length manuscript on Nationalism and Communism in Soviet Armenia. This work has been supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research in New York, two consecutive grants from which Foundation enabled the author to undertake two field trips to Soviet Armenia during the academic year 1959-60. He spent several months there visiting and collecting data among Armenians in Moscow, Tiflis, Erevan, Etchmiadzin, Girovagan and Sevan. Fol-

lowing his return, he was invited to continue his research as a Visiting Scholar at the Center For International Studies at M.I.T. and a year later as a Research Fellow at the Center For Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard. Last year the American Philosophical Society awarded him a grant to cover expenses involved in the preparation of his manuscript on Soviet Armenia.

Dr. Dadrian received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago and taught in the same field as Assistant Professor at Washington College, University of Idaho and Boston University.

Prior to coming to this country, he attended the Universities of Berlin, Vienna and Zurich. He is fluent in Armenian, Turkish, German, French and English. He also understands Azerbaidjani and is currently learning his Russian.

#### ● AN IMPORTANT DISCUSSION:

## Differing Positions of the Russians And the Non-Russians in the Soviet Union

REUBEN DARBINIAN

Even the most liberal Russian anti-communists who have an unreserved sympathy to the liberational cause of the backward nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America, become exceedingly riled and consider it a hostile act toward the Russian people wherever the expatriates of one or other non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union raise the question of their country's right to independence.

It turns out that even the most backward and semi-barbarian nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America have a perfect right to their independence, but the non-Russian nations of the Soviet Union, such as the Armenians and the Georgians, who have had a civilization of their own for thousands of years, are deprived, and should be deprived of that right.

Why? Because allegedly the Russians and the non-Russians of the Soviet Union are linked together with inseparable historical ties and that the government is not restricted to the Russians alone but it equally is shared by the non-Russians.

Without doubt, the Russians and the non-Russians of the Soviet Union have a common historical past, and they all, more or less, have had their share in the great achievements of the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the more than fifty na-

tions which during the past two to three decades have won their independence, have, likewise, had some history of their own with the nations which have enslaved them but that fact has failed to unite them once and forever.

Again, it is highly significant that the leaders of the most liberal-minded Russians are reluctant to realize that the position of the Russians and the non-Russians in the Soviet Union is neither equal nor identical, but differs for two fundamental reasons.

The first fact is that historically, and actually even at the present time the Russians are the dominant race in that gigantic state, although, numerically, they are scarcely the equal of the non-Russians. Further, the dominant language in the land is the Russian. And finally, the Russians have no need of aspiring to national independence because they already possess a national state and they are free of foreign oppression. And if the Russian people have now a burning issue, that is not the question of their national independence, but the question of internal freedom, namely, the question of ridding themselves of the strangulating tyranny of a Communist power.

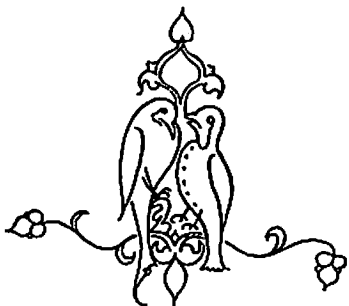
The second cause of mutual misun-

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# the ARMENIAN

## Review

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### An Appraisal of the Communist Formula 'National in Form, Socialist in Content' With Particular Reference to Soviet Armenia

VAHAKN N. DADRIAN

#### PART II

*Soviet Politics In Transcaucasia*  
As a rule, the task of analyzing ethnic relations requires the application of an historical perspective. This task becomes particularly urgent when the nationalities involved are quite ancient in character and, what is more important, are highly conscious of this fact.

No other region of the Soviet Union could possibly exceed the Transcaucasus in

terms of this condition of historical saturation, a condition which gains powerful impetus from the fact of contradictory ethnic origin and identification. A by-product of this condition has been the sense of distinction and a pathos to uphold that distinction, which mark the historical and ethnic awareness of the three nationalities involved — particularly the Georgians and the Armenians.<sup>1</sup> This is the

<sup>1</sup>The recent edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia cites Transcaucasian Cultures as appearing in the 3rd-2nd millenium B.C. and as



kind of nationalist mood which by definition and logic is pregnant with ethnic conflicts. It has indeed led to a climate of persistent rivalries before as well as after the advent of the Soviet regime.

It reached a sanguine climax in the turbulent period which followed the collapse of Tsarist Russia and preceded the onset of the Communist regime, i.e., 1917-1921. The intensity and scope of this violence and the ensuing bitterness accruing to the parties, find still covert echoes in some of the literature coming from the region, but more particularly in instances of trusted mouth-to-mouth communication.

such are recognized embodying the oldest ethnic region of the U.S.S.R. The same authors mention Armenia specifically as the historically oldest country in their *Chronological Tables, Information U.S.S.R.*, Ed. Robert Maxwell, New York, 1962, p. 700. As to "The Most Important Events in Literature and Art" in the history of the U.S.S.R., the first place is accorded Soviet Armenia with reference to the Reconstruction of the Etchmiadzin Cathedral (470-480) and second place to Georgia with reference to the construction of the Church of Dzkhvari about a century later. *Ibid.* p. 750. It should be stressed that the Armenian Cathedral of the Holy See in Etchmiadzin, near Erevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia is a veritable mecca for pilgrims from all over the world but specifically for tourists from many parts of the Soviet Union as well as from satellite countries in Europe. While a guest there of the Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians, I met a group of staff members of the British and Canadian Embassies in Moscow who had flown to Armenia for the specific purpose of seeing the Cathedral and who were in the same plane with me on my return to Moscow. Actually, the Cathedral was first built in 303 A.D. coinciding with the proclamation of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia and thus heralding the Armenians as the first Christian nation of the world. Presently it is being renovated once more in terms of structural consolidation and aesthetic beautification, with funds both from the Soviet Armenian government and the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

A factor which tended to precipitate and aggravate acute hostilities has been and still is the cumbersome demography of the region. It includes, for instance, a number of minority enclaves and hostile majorities surrounding them. In addition, it incorporates Autonomic Regions which are ruled not by the predominant nationality of the region but by another one. These conditions were highly aggravated by the acute rivalries in the top echelons of the Communist Party ruling the Transcaucasus and involving the outstanding communist leaders of the three nationalities of the region. Ambitions for power and personal antagonisms were often transposed, covertly to be sure, to the level of national conflicts thus amplifying existing discords and tensions.

Finally, unfulfilled promises made by Stalin and his coterie at the inception of the regime concerning the proper adjudication of territorial disputes and demographic corrections in the region, are a latent source of friction. They are encumbering the fulfillment of the Soviet ambition of "homogenizing" the three major nationalities. This in spite of repeated Soviet assertions that fraternal communism has resolved the racial and ethnic conflicts of the area.<sup>2</sup> It is true that since the imposition of the Soviet regime, no wars have been fought among the three nationalities. In itself, this fact warrants the recognition of some credit to the regime, particularly against the background of the bloodshed of the past and more particu-

<sup>2</sup>The claim was demonstratively reiterated by Khrushchev in his principal addresses delivered about two years ago in the three capitals of the Republics of the region. The occasion involved the festivities marking the 40th anniversary of Sovietization of these Republics. See *Moscow News Supplements* 19 (542) March 13, 1961, and 20 (543) May 20, 1961.

larly of the Tsarist machinations contributing to the bloodshed of the Armenians and the Azerbaijani's in the conflagration of 1905, for instance.

But one should also recognize the serious difference between the mandate of inhibiting conflicts and the judicious wisdom of resolving conflicts. The first is predicated upon coercion and threat and therefore is conducive to cumulative frustrations. Since the vistas of group aggressiveness born out of frustration are rather limited in the Soviet Union, unhealthy patterns of displacement, deflection and ambivalent political attitudes are the inevitable channels of compensation. Moreover, repressed antagonisms when sustained over a long period of time, have often proved more cataclysmic than the precipitation of actual armed collisions, in modern history of the nations.

Viewed thusly, the Soviet formula of reliance on Socialist culture as an antidote to local nationalism is at best an act of incubation, protracting the forces of conflict, and at worst an act of self-deception disregarding needed solutions.<sup>3</sup> The suggestion that with the lapse of sufficient time the generational factor, i.e., the dying out of the old and the arrival on the scene of a new Soviet generation, will "communistically" dispense with the matter, seems of questionable validity for the Trans-

<sup>3</sup>In his famous letter addressed to "the Communist comrades" in the Caucasus in the Spring of 1921, Lenin expressed his high hope for such a solution which would be inconceivable for the "bourgeoisie" and for its social and political system. In the same vein, he once more emphasized, however, that the only way to secure "international peace" in the region would be to "intelligently take into consideration the local peculiarities, the concrete conditions of the Caucasus." K. P. Gharibjanian, *Lenin and the Liberation of the Transcaucasian Peoples*, Erevan, 1960, p. 133.

caucasus—for general reasons adduced above and for specific reasons to be discussed next.

In assessing the character and the problems of the Transcaucasus, it is crucial to grasp the importance which the Communist leadership attached, and continues to attach, to the region. A good measure in this respect is obtained by the following proclamation made by Stalin in the formative years of the Soviet Union:

"The Caucasus is of major significance to the revolution, not because it is a source of raw materials, fuel and food, but also because it lies between Europe and Asia, in particular between Russia and Turkey, and because of its economically and strategically important roads . . . its oil and the supremely important roads into the heart of Asia."<sup>4</sup>

This sweeping proclamation is of dual significance. First, it explicitly defines the position of the regime vis a vis the region, and in so doing reveals the motivations and objectives of communism reaching beyond that region. Secondly, the source of the proclamation accents the authority inherent in it. For, Stalin was not an incidental figure in the design and execution of Soviet policies for the Transcaucasus. From the very inception of the regime he was Peoples Commissar of Nationalities. His Georgian heritage keynoted this position. But most importantly, Lenin's dependence upon Stalin in matters affecting that region augmented the latter's power considerably. The execution by the British in 1918 of Shaumian, Lenin's old and trusted Armenian lieutenant in the Caucasus who was designated by Lenin as the Extraordinary Commissar in Charge of Caucasian Affairs, facilitated Stalin's rise

<sup>4</sup>Stalin, *Works* (English) Vol. 4, p. 420.

to power and impelled Lenin to henceforth rely chiefly on Stalin.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, when Lenin was considering the preparation of a blueprint of Soviet policy towards Armenia, he advised the Armenian Communists to discuss it with Stalin.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, on another occasion, he requested from Al Miassnigian that the latter seek the assistance of Stalin in order to obtain "order in the Caucasus" since he, Lenin, admitted to being "ignorant and could commit errors."<sup>7</sup> Also, before sending his first message to the Georgian communists after Sovietization of that country, he consulted Stalin, with the following note, "Please dispatch, but if you have any objection, ring me upon the telephone."<sup>8</sup>

The fact that Lenin subsequently became quite disappointed in Stalin was rather inconsequential. One might even argue that Lenin's acrimonious letters and comments decrying Stalin's usurpation of power, particularly in the Caucasus, proved catalytic—for the latter's winning control in the party against Trotsky following Lenin's death, and his ultimate consolidation of power. What is of higher import for consideration, however, was the fact that Stalin was a Georgian and for about three crucial decades he was to determine the fate of the Soviet Union, and more particularly the fate of the nationalities in the Transcaucasus.

The extraordinary circumstances which

<sup>5</sup> Stalin's presence in Moscow made this easier because it was more convenient for Lenin to reach decisions promptly.

<sup>6</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 4, Erevan, 1925, p. 404. (The designation Erevan indicates that work referred to is written in Armenian, but that for purposes of convenience, it appears in this article in English translation.)

<sup>7</sup> *Memoirs of Old Bolsheviks*, Miassnigian Article, Vol. I, Erevan, 1958, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Lenin, Marx Engels Institute, Moscow, Published in London, no date, probably 1942, p. 181.

then descended upon and engulfed the three nationalities of the region were ushered in by the appointment of Beria, another Georgian and a crony of Stalin, to the posts of 1. ruler of Transcaucasia, and 2, ultimately head of the Secret Police. The irony of the first appointment stems from the fact that as Stalin's star ascended in the Caucasus as a result of Shaumian's execution, so did Beria's star ascend as a result of the death in 1925 of another prominent Armenian Communist, namely, Al Miassnigian.<sup>9</sup>

Lenin personally had appointed Miassnigian to rule as the first Secretary of the Transcaucasian Federation. It is therefore warranted to assert that the actual preponderance of top Georgian communists in a decisive way set the stage for the unrest, repressions and purges which beset the region until the deaths of Stalin and Beria. It was inevitable, therefore, that the bitter antagonisms engendered by these coercive and punitive measures were directed to the nationality with which the two were identified, namely, the Georgians. This in itself has proven to be a central factor in the undercurrent hostilities between the Georgians on the one hand and the two other nationalities on the other. The drastic measures of de-Stalinization and the unleashing of a violent anti-Beria and anti-Stalin campaign in Armenia and Azerbaijan since 1954 are revealing of the intensity and magnitude of the sentiments involved. They became particularly reinforced on account of the manner with which the Georgians reacted to this campaign. With daring boldness, many Georgians continued to exalt Stalin as a great hero, thus defying the other nationalities, and the central organs of the Communist

<sup>9</sup> His plane crashed near Tiflis, and until today the cause of the accident remains unaccounted for.

Party in Moscow which initiated and supported this campaign. In this respect it is worthwhile to note once more the role which Mikoyan, the only living top Armenian communist from the Caucasus, played in giving impetus to this campaign in Armenia.<sup>10</sup>

In brief, then, the sway of key and powerful Georgian figures in Transcaucasus operated to compound the difficulties intrinsic to the scheme of "merging" the nationalities via "socialist culture." By the same token, it became evident that matters of culture could not be isolated from the exertions of politics. Attention should now be shifted to another level of the problem where communist politics operated to obstruct Socialist culture in the Transcaucasus.

As indicated above, this course of events was dictated by the authority of Stalin and falls within the purview of internal considerations, as far as the Soviet regime is concerned. In his proclamation defining the importance of the Caucasus, Stalin alluded, however, to equally, if not more important, factors of foreign policy considerations. Here, Lenin and Stalin seemed to be converging in their views. The foreign country upon which both leaders consistently placed a premium in terms of befriending her and avoiding antagonizing her was Turkey. A primary reason for this discernment was not only Turkey's geographic and strategic position, but her ethnic character, namely, her representing the Turkish peoples of the Caucasus as well as Central Asia. Lenin, particularly was quite sensitive about this fact. The instances where he emphasized over and over again his feelings in this respect are numerous. They date from his reactions

to what he termed "the pillage of Turkey" by Tsarist Russia and the Entente Powers in a secret treaty of 1916.<sup>11</sup>

Stalin was more explicit in this connection. In the 12th Congress of R. C. P. (B) in April 1923 when repudiating Rakovsky's resolution concerning the preeminence of state entities like the Ukraine, as against dispersed minorities like Bashkiria, for instance, he declared:

"If we make a slight mistake in the Ukraine, the effect upon the East will not be great. But we have only to make one slight mistake in a small country, in Ajaristan (120,000 population) for the effect to be felt in Turkey, to be felt in the whole East, for Turkey is most closely connected with the East . . . The relative importance of these small nationalities is much higher than that of the Ukraine."<sup>12</sup>

In the same vein, like Lenin, Stalin considered the Turkic nationalities a pivotal factor for the spread of communism. ". . . it is obvious that of all the Soviet Republics, Turkestan is the most important from the standpoint of revolutionizing the East . . . Turkestan presents a combination of nationalities most closely connected with the East."<sup>13</sup>

As could be expected, this line of policy elevating Turkey and Turkic peoples to a high posture of value, found its proper reflection in the political order of Soviet Transcaucasus. It led, for instance, to treaties which benefited Azerbaijan and drastically impaired Armenia.

As early as December 1917, in the wake of the October Revolution, Lenin received an urgent plea from the Armenian Communists in Moscow not to withdraw the Russian troops from the Turkish front. Poet Derian who was the chief spokesman

<sup>11</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow 1947, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> Stalin, *Works* (English) Vol. 5, p. 283-281.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 336.

<sup>10</sup> See Part II of this article in *Armenian Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 3-63, Autumn 1963, p. 11.

of the group, called to Lenin's attention the fact that "the Turks had massacred more than 1,250,000 Armenians, and caused the uprooting of another 1.5 million Armenians from their ancestral homes in the war years."<sup>14</sup>

In a second visit, he again implored Lenin to leave Russian armed contingents in the Armenian provinces of Turkey to avert further atrocities and to safeguard the return of the expellees.

In line with his proven dexterity for political manipulation, Lenin managed to thwart this plan by using Stalin as a consultant, and arguing that Armenians should be afforded a chance for free self-determination and that the presence of Russian soldiers could be construed as "pressure for Russian orientation."<sup>15</sup> Naturally, there were many internal considerations favoring such a course of action. The October Revolution had created a powerful impact upon the Russian soldiers of the Turkish front which rapidly tended to erode, thus threatening to produce a huge vacuum in the area. Deserting the front and rushing home was proving a contagious convenience for most of the soldiers. The revolutionary clamor for peace, bread, and home acted as a catalyst for relief. But, one could also argue that this movement of desertion could be checked and eventually arrested, provided there was a sufficient determination on the part of Lenin. If there was any determination for the region, it pointed in the direction of definitely favoring the Turks as a bone of contention vis a vis the Entente powers.

Already in November 1916 Lenin was loudly declaring "imperialistic" designs on

<sup>14</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 4, Erevan, pp. 404, 405.

<sup>15</sup> This information is contained in a letter which the poet sent to his friend Bagintzian on the day of his new visit with Lenin. *Nork*, (Arm. Monthly) No. 6, 1925, p. 416.

Turkey which, he claimed, "has been deprived of Armenia" as a result of these designs.<sup>16</sup>

In the crucial months of Summer 1920, when the Independent Republic of Armenia, totally abandoned by the victorious Allies, was desperately trying to continue her existence against internal as well as external foes, Lenin was plotting the demise of that Republic in collusion with a Turkish delegation negotiating in Moscow. As General Ali Fouad, the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow (1920-1922), relates in his memoirs: "A day after our meeting with Chicherin, on August 14, 1920, the Turkish delegation was received by Lenin (who stated) 'The emancipation of the total Islamic world is the basis of our policy. I am hopeful that the institution of such independent Islam Republics as Kazakstan, Turkestan and Bashkiria will be appreciated by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. . . We found Lenin to be extremely candid and sympathetic to us and to the Islamic community at large.'"

The actual purpose of the Turkish trip to Moscow was to elicit sanctions from Lenin regarding Turkish plans of a military assault on Armenia, ostensibly to effect the coordination and mutual support of the Turkish and Red armies.

Continuing his account of the meeting, the Turkish Ambassador relates:

"Lenin promised to solve the Armenian problem in favor of us in 3-4 days."<sup>17</sup> This meant the destruction of the Independent Republic which was "an obstacle in the

<sup>16</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 23, Erevan, p. 231.

<sup>17</sup> Ali Fouad Djebesoy, *Moscow Memoirs*, (Turkish) Istanbul, 1955, p. 73. Also see H. Besajian, "Excerpts From the Memoirs of Ali Fouad Pasha" (Arm. Translation) *Hairenik* (Monthly) Vol. 40, No. 1 January 1962, pp. 38-42.

roads of communication between the two states."<sup>18</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that the main reason why Lenin and his advisors were relenting on the Turkish instance of using military force was not humanistic concern for Armenia but, according to the account of the Turkish Ambassador, "any attempt for a solution through an attack and via military force could provoke adverse counterreactions on the part of the Western powers."<sup>19</sup> The Turks eventually prevailed upon Lenin, the attack was coordinated with a drive by the Red Army and Armenia succumbed. To punctuate the spirit of the scheme of coordination of the two powers, the Turkish Military Command dispatched a message of congratulations,<sup>20</sup> on December 1, 1920, to the Armenian Revolutionary Committee, which, exploiting the situation, had forcefully established itself as the Supreme Ruling body of Armenia.

Naturally, there are many reasons why these events, their revelations, and interpretations require cautious treatment. This necessity for caution is dictated not only by the recognition of inevitable bias in the accounts of a given party involved, but also by the employment of a framework which is extricated from the pressure of unfolding events impinging upon the acting parties. Distance in time and space are vital needs for a scholarly perspective as far as the task of grasping the web of events and their circumspect analysis is concerned. But, by the same token, there is something crucially amiss in such a perspective—because of this very fact of distance. It involves the emergent quality of interacting behavior

<sup>18</sup> *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1926, p. 438.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 4, p. 427.

among contestants which is never fully understood by people, who however skilled they may be in human relations analysis, are removed from the scene of interaction. This is the highly crucial field of subjective motivations and their highly cumbersome, elusive, and unpredictable patterns of dynamics. The fact of the matter is that in conflict situations, ongoing tensions, shifts in alignments, hidden anticipations of rival moves, suspected stratagems and deflections are all factors which are intrinsic to given situations, are felt but often are not openly admitted, verbalized or articulated by the actors involved and therefore in a sense elude and defy accurate analysis by outsiders or distant people.

When applying this type of caution to the conspiracy of the Lenin clique and the representatives of Mustafa Kemal against Armenia, new problem dimensions emerge. Their proper understanding are likely to enlarge the area illuminating the motivations of Soviet behavior vis a vis Armenia and indirectly, Azerbaijan.

First of all, reservations must be automatically exercised regarding the accuracy of any memoirs. Secondly, the inaccessibility of Soviet archives containing verbatim transcripts of the negotiations with the Turks is a source of unabated frustrations, accenting the need for further reservations.

Thirdly, and most importantly, however, Soviet collusion with the Turks should be interpreted in a framework reaching beyond the narrow confines of Armenia and her population. At the time the Turks were negotiating with the Communists for the Treaty of Moscow, for example, at that very time another Turkish delegation headed by Bekir Semi, the Foreign Minister of Turkey of Kemal, was negotiating in London. According to Soviet sources, Bekir Sami, in a secret proposal to Lloyd

George, offered to join the Anti-Soviet camp and in a concerted drive with Turkic peoples in the Caucasus, to stem the tide of the Communists. These sources further claim that the disclosure of the secret deal offer, plus the recalcitrance of the British to renounce the Sevres Treaty, had prompted the Turks to concentrate on Lenin.<sup>21</sup> In their official negotiations, the Turks had also requested the withdrawal of the Greek Army from Turkey, restoration of their 1913 European frontiers and reconfirmation of the Armenian frontiers in accord with the Treaty of Alexandropol. *The Times* in London called these, "absurd demands."<sup>22</sup>

To wind up the diplomatic tragi-comedy that was being enacted in this period, the Russians were also negotiating with a delegation from the Independent Republic of Armenia. Contrary to the wishes of the delegation, the Soviets were procrastinating for understandable reasons. After many fruitless efforts, in which vague promises were entwined with covert and overt Communist threats, the Armenian delegation headed by poet Chanth, was induced to depart. The negotiations were first continued in Tiflis and later on, on the eve of the collapse of the Republic, in Erevan. On October 14, Moscow issued an ultimatum demanding free passage to join the Turks.

"Regardless of the fact that she was surrounded by such enemies, deprived of all supplies and forsaken by her pretended Allies, Armenia rejected the Russian ultimatum *in toto*. Meanwhile, the Bol-

<sup>21</sup> E. Sarkissian and R. Sahakian, *The Distortion in Turkish Historiography of the Modern History of the Armenian People*, Erevan, 1963, pp. 67 ff. To save face, the same authors contend, M. Kemal dismissed Bekir Sami as Turkish Foreign Minister.

<sup>22</sup> *Times*, London, February 25, 1921.

shevik emissaries worked their way into the ranks of the Armenian Army, and spread reports that Kemal was supported by France and Italy, and that the salvation of Armenia was possible only through the compliance with the demands of Moscow."<sup>23</sup>

Being aware of the negotiations in London but unaware of the discords, Lenin had cause for inclinations towards a compromise. Thus, consistent with a pattern so typical of Turkish foreign policy in contemporary history and so remarkably successful in most instances, the Turks manipulated the moments of uncertainty and acute rivalry eventually to prevail. As if to encourage such inclinations for compromise, and unable to endure the hardships and the abuses of 2.5 months of communist rule, the Armenians overthrew the regime and proclaimed their independence once more. This was the first and last solid rebellion on the part of a conquered nationality in the history of Soviet Transcaucasia. It was a match to the period in which the agonies of a decimated abandoned and destitute people were not relieved or redeemed but were ruthlessly aggravated. But, above all, it was a blow to Lenin who was then negotiating with the Turks who promptly withdrew their concessions regarding territorial adjustments with Armenia.

This is then the fuller range of circumstances in the context of which the rapprochement with the Turks should be understood. It was a rapprochement with dire consequences for Armenia.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> James W. Gerard, "Armenia, Russia and the Lausanne Treaty," *The Lausanne Treaty, Turkey and Armenia*, N.Y., 1926, p. 159. (Published by the Armenian Committee Opposed to the Lausanne Treaty).

<sup>24</sup> The Turks would not and could not be dislocated from Alexandropol which they had

Her territorial disputes with Azerbaijan were dismissed as if they did not exist or were irrelevant—contrary to solemn proclamations confirming a settlement in favor of Armenia by Stalin, and by Armenian as well as Azerbaijani Communists on the eve of Sovietization of Armenia. In an interview published in *Pravda* on December 4, 1920, headlined with the intonation "Long live Armenia," Stalin formally proclaimed:

"On December 1, Soviet Azerbaijan voluntarily renounced its claim to the disputed provinces and ceded Zangezur, Nakhichevan and Nagorny Karabagh to Soviet Armenia."<sup>25</sup>

A few months later, when Armenian armed contingents were still resisting the Red Army and proclaiming the Independence of Zangezur, the Mountain Armenia, to lure them into submission, Avnis Nuri-chanian, People's Military Commissar of

conquered but were to vacate according to their agreement with the Soviets. Exasperated after many vain diplomatic efforts, the Soviet government authorized the Commander of the Red Army in the Caucasus to issue an ultimatum to the Turks implying resort to war in case of further delay and failure of compliance. The city was eventually vacated after committing the last large-scale atrocity which claimed approximately 115,000 Armenians, then Soviet citizens. According to the author, "several thousand Armenians were buried alive in wells." P. H. Lalapegian, *V. Lenin and the Establishment and Consolidation of the Soviet System in Transcaucasia*, Erevan, 1961, p. 225. A history textbook claims the following specified casualties for the provinces of Kars and Alexandropol. Massacred: 30,000 men, 30,000 women and children. Starved to death: 32,000. In addition, the Turks "dispatched 15,000 able bodied men to the region of Erzeroun for compulsory labor, the large part of whom disappeared never to return home." H. M. Eltchiagian and A. M. Hagopian, *Outlines of the History of Soviet Armenia*, Vol. I, Erevan, p. 68.

<sup>25</sup> Stalin, *Works* (English) Vol. 4, p. 427.

Soviet Armenia, announced solemnly (April 23):

"Zangezur and Mountainous Karabagh constitute an inseparable part of Armenia." A month later, during negotiations with the Government of Karabagh, the Soviet Delegation made the following solemn commitment: "Zangezur and Mountainous Karabagh constitute an inseparable part of Armenia." Again, on June 12, 1921, the Government of Soviet Armenia declared:

"Based upon an agreement arrived at between the SSR governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia, Mountainous Karabagh from now on constitutes an inseparable part of the SSR Republic of Armenia." A day later, the news was reconfirmed by the safe government of Soviet Armenia in Erevan.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, ancient Armenia territories which were part of Russian Armenia prior to World War I, were ceded to Turkey through a series of treaties culminating in that of Kars (October 18, 1921).

The irony of the treaty is that the Turks relented considerably before signing it. The Turks did not want to sign a joint agreement with the three nationality groups of the Transcaucasia. They insisted on separate treaties. The Soviets equally adamantly insisted, on a joint treaty. The Turks began to procrastinate in the hope for a violent eruption of the Russian-Polish crisis. The Turkish delegation was headed by Kiazim Karabekir, the Supreme Commander of the Turkish Eastern Army, the conqueror of Turkish and Russian Armenia and a sworn enemy of the Armenians. Soviet authors alluded to earlier,<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> All 4 items quoted and discussed by James Mandalian "The Transcaucasian Armenian Irredenta," *Armenian Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 2-54, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> E. Sarkissian and R. Sahakian, *op. cit.*, final portion.

contend that he wanted to face the Armenians alone so as to be able to impose harsher conditions upon them. He finally yielded, but even then, the Kars Treaty provisions for Armenia were so harsh and those for Azerbaijan so favorable, thanks to the exertion of the Turks, that a Communist historian, a participant observer, felt constrained to speak of the Treaty as a *coup de grace* which "completed the surrender of Armenia to Turkey."<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the greatest calamity which befell Armenia as a result of this Soviet-Turkish Alliance was that it afforded a plausible excuse to the Entente Powers to renege their official and unofficial commitments to the Armenians in terms of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. One by one, starting with Italy, France, England, and the United States, they all divorced themselves from the cause of Armenia in line with their new marriage with Kemalist Turkey.

This unprecedented and contagious betrayal of the Armenians by the Allies culminated in the Treaty of Lausanne which Lloyd George decried as "an abject, cowardly, and infamous surrender"<sup>29</sup> to the Turks.

One of the U.S. Senators, who along with President Wilson and many other prominent Americans<sup>30</sup> was actively campaigning to recognize and justly reward the bravery and sacrifices of nearly 300,000 Armenians who had fought for the

<sup>28</sup> B. Botian, *Armenia* (Russian) Vol. II, Moscow-Leningrad, p. 303.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants*, N.Y., 1946, p. 198.

<sup>30</sup> For a full coverage of the specific groups, academic, administrative and public figures involved, see Charles Vertanes, *Armenia Reborn*, N.Y., 1947, pp. 34, 35. The opposition by large sectors of American public opinion was so vehement and pronounced, that the ratification of the Lausanne Treaty could not pass the Senate.

cause of the Allies in World War I, summed up this self-debasement of European diplomacy in this succinct manner:

"The triumphant Turks called the Allied and Associated Powers, including the U.S., to meet them at Lausanne to sign treaties such as the former might dictate . . . with an assurance and arrogance, perhaps unparalleled in treaty negotiations, they wrote Treaties for the Allied Nations to sign, and dictated the Treaty which the United States was to sign. (The Allies) cynically and brutally ignored Armenia and, in effect, endorsed the butchery of the Armenians and the expulsion of the remnants of the Armenian race from their ancestral lands."<sup>31</sup>

To accentuate the macabre drama of this diplomatic truculence, the Soviets went out of their way to support the Turks in Lausanne. As one student, who had actual access to the Soviet actors involved, stated:

"It devolved on the Russians at Lausanne . . . to be 'more Turkish than the Turks.'"<sup>32</sup>

The general and specific reasons accounting for this Soviet attitude of maximum subservience to the Turks have been discussed earlier. As indicated before, they inevitably necessitated callous and harsher treatment of the Armenians, counterposed to the Turks, their *non plus ultra* nemesis in modern history.

Before dispatching his trusted Armenian aide to the Caucasus to take over the rule of the region, Lenin had a long conversation with him. As Al Miassnigian related himself:

<sup>31</sup> American Committee Opposed to the Treaty of Lausanne, *op. cit.* pp. 58-59; the Senator was William H. King, from the State of Utah, who visited the Near East twice at the end of World War I and studied the Armenian and Turkish situations.

"To my question as to what policies I ought to follow regarding Turkey, Lenin advised me to be very careful and tactful towards the peoples of the East."<sup>32</sup> Hidden in this recurrent theme is much that can explain the spirit of Soviet supersensitivity vis a vis the Turks which is so bluntly revealed in the latest statement (11 November 1963) made by Khrushchev to the Turks on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the death of Kemal Ataturk. After lavishing praises on "the industrious Turkish nation," the Chairman indicated that he would like to return to the era of mutual support of Kemal: "There is not a single serious cause which could prevent this . . . Comprehensive cooperation between Turkey and the Soviet Union now would be of as great importance as in the Ataturk era."<sup>34</sup>

It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say

<sup>32</sup> Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, Vol. I, London, p. 404.

<sup>33</sup> *Memoirs Regarding Lenin*, Vol. 2, Erevan, p. 121.

<sup>34</sup> Moscow broadcast in Turkish to Turkey 1030 G.M.T., 11 November 1963.

that of all the nationalities in the Soviet Union in general and the Transcaucasus in particular, the Armenians are the most frustrated, bitter and bewildered nationality.

Saturated with an awareness of recurrent historical tragedy, still overwhelmed by the melancholy spell of the holocaust of the Turkish massacres, and the cataclysmic political and military blows descending upon her in the wake of these massacres, and finally, shackled to the condition of a compulsory subservience to an alien system which is insensitive to her particular problems and cruelly disdainful to her quest for justice, Armenia, even though drastically reduced in territorial size and relegated to a minor position in terms of population, occupies a unique vantage ground in the inexorable contest between communism and nationalism in the Soviet Union. This is the general context in which her particular relationships with Georgia and Azerbaijan are to be discussed next.

(To be continued)