Ethnic Hierarchies and National Identity in a Sovietised Caucasus: Unravelling Cultural Shifts of Soviet Governing during the Lenin and Stalin eras.

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Abstract

This thesis researches the connection between ethnic hierarchies and national identity in the Caucasus region during the Lenin and Stalin eras, focusing on cultural shifts as an effect of Soviet governance while decentralising Russia. The Caucasus region and its people are greatly marginalised within Soviet historiography, as was their position in Soviet society. This can be seen in the way they were forced to assimilate to the Soviet identity, an identity which was closely in line with the Russian identity. The homo sovieticus concept is used as a comparative tool with the Caucasus identity to understand how Soviet Russia enforced this ideological view of the perfect Soviet citizen, and in what ways the Caucasus people fell victim to this mentality.

The enforcement of the Soviet identity onto the Caucasus led to the dismissal of Caucasus issues and increased the Russian saviour complex. The need to educate and mediate tensions in the region resulted in the overall resistance to the regime. This resulted in the loss of the Caucasus voice in Soviet scholarship overall, which is why this thesis challenges the dominant role of Russia in historiography throughout the research. By close reading the transcripts from the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System interviews, the Caucasus voice is uplifted and prioritised in understanding their experiences living in Soviet society. Their experiences are analysed through three themes, which are religion, education and overall living conditions.

Key words: Sovietisation, Caucasus, homo sovieticus, Russian saviour complex, ethnic hierarchy, identity.

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Introduction

The recent Russian-Ukrainian war has highlighted the presence of Neo-Sovietism in Eastern Europe and the topic of post-Soviet belonging has resurfaced. Post-Soviet belonging and the lasting Soviet influence in the Caucasus are especially interesting for scholarship, as the area encompasses various cultures, languages and religions. The Caucasus region is situated between the Caspian and Black Seas which can be divided along the Caucasus mountains between the North and South. The South Caucasus includes the former Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The North Caucasus includes the autonomous republics within the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, such as Adygea, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and North Ossetia-Alania. National governance and political structures in this region can be understood within the context of forced Sovietisation and assimilation that took place between the Lenin and Stalin eras. A limitation of this is that Caucasus people, specifically from the North Caucasus, have been disregarded as independent identities within Soviet history, thus ethnic hierarchy and racial politics are a niche within Soviet scholarship.

Researching the lasting impact of Soviet policies goes beyond historical analysis, as the focus is giving space to marginalised Caucasus voices and the relation to contemporary issues that persisted following the dissolution of the USSR. The national identities from the Caucasus and their place within Soviet society have been researched using interviews from the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System conducted in the years 1950-1953. These interviews were held with refugees who fled the Soviet Union and explain their experiences living in the USSR, which offers a personal perspective from the Caucasus refugees. In addition, the outside perspective of Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians are employed to highlight differences in experiences. However, the Caucasus experience will remain central to truly dissect the effects of Soviet governance on this group and decentralise Russia.

My Armenian heritage has allowed for a broader understanding of Caucasus culture, identity and their experiences with Soviet ethnical hierarchy. The knowledge on Caucasus culture and identity was further embodied from the stories of my parents' experiences in Soviet Armenia and the way I grew up with post-Soviet and Caucasus influenced upbringing. Through this embodied knowledge I was able to internalise the

experiences of the interviewees and understand them from my habitus. [1] This has resulted in an analysis that is more aligned with the perspective of the Caucasus people and identity.

This thesis explores the effects of Soviet policies on the Caucasus area during the incorporation of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia as the Socialist Federative Republic. The Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR) and its relations with the USSR center Moscow during the Sovietisation period starting from 1922 to 1953 presented societal developments in the previously agriculture-based area. The way people were affected by national governance and political structures within the context of Sovietisation revealed how the lives of Caucasus citizens changed in various ways. Most notably, the effects of Sovietisation in the Caucasus touch upon significant developments in the Caucasus identity and living experience.

Research Question

This research covers the Lenin and Stalin eras as this period covers the annexation of the Caucasus, the Sovietisation process in the region, and the accelerated developments under Stalin's rule in the Caucasus republics. This timeframe is selected in order to research and understand the effects of Soviet Union governance on the Caucasus identity. This research question is of great relevance in the field of Soviet scholarship, as it considers the forgotten story of the Caucasus perspective during the first 30 years of the Union. The Caucasus identity, and in broader sense, the Caucasus voice within Soviet historiography, is a necessary foundation to understand current geopolitical issues within this region.

Nationalism and Soviet identity influenced the study regarding ethnicity in the Soviet Union. According to Khazanov, nationalism experienced by non-Russian peoples was seen as a Western characteristic and thus a threat to Soviet society.[2] This development related to the creation of a new nationalistic identity among Caucasus people as an effect of Soviet governance.

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[1] Gabriel Ignatow. 2007. "Theories of Embodied Knowledge: New Directions for Cultural and Cognitive Sociology?" *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 37 (2). P.129.
[2] Anatoly Khazanov. 'The Ethnic Situation in the Soviet Union as Reflected in Soviet Anthropology'. *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Sovietique* 31, no. 2 (1990): p.214.

To break down this broad research into central themes, the key topics of religion, education and overall livelihood, which each have a dedicated chapter in the thesis, will help answer the main research question.

The Caucasus identity is closely related to religious beliefs, as Christianity, Islam and Judaism are present in this area. As the Bolsheviks rose to power and annexed the Caucasus region, atheism was spread as part of Soviet ideology. To understand how this forced atheism in Soviet society affected this region, the experiences of religious Caucasus people are centred.

Education in the Caucasus is a central theme within the thesis as it allows for an analysis on Soviet ideology portrayed in education. Soviet education in the Caucasus potentially affected the Caucasus people in a way to spread this ideology, to "educate" according to Soviet standards, and influence the future livelihoods of the next generation. For this, the focus is on how systemic discrimination in education affected the Caucasus ethnicities.

As a continuation, the overall liveability of Caucasus people is analysed through further close reading of people's daily lives. Aspects such as forced Sovietisation, Russian language learning, censorship and housing were affected because of people's Caucasus-ness during the process of Sovietisation. Thus, the process of Sovietisation is analysed through the experiences of the Caucasus people and how this affected their daily lives.

Theoretical concepts

The key theoretical concepts in this research are rooted in understanding the lasting effects of Soviet Union governance on the Caucasus. These concepts touch different key themes such as (national) identity, ethnic hierarchy, discrimination and intersectionality. The experiences of (ex-)Soviet citizens are then placed within these theoretical concepts to uncover different societal constructs that existed for these people during the Lenin and Stalin eras. The conceptual framework, theoretical perspectives and key constructs that make up this research will form as the foundation for the historiography.

The general conceptual framework of this thesis will draw upon Crenshaw's intersectionality theory which covers how different social themes such as race, gender,

class and education overlap and create unique experiences.[3] The main themes of education and religion especially touch upon the intersectionality perspective, and the Soviet policies of the time influenced minorities' social position within society. This was evident for Muslim groups such as the Chechen minority group, who were more excluded from educational opportunities by atheist education in comparison to Orthodox Christians. The experiences of Caucasus minorities, through the various aspects that shape their identity or were affected by their identity, showed the inequalities that the Caucasus people experienced in Soviet society.

The primary theoretical perspective that will be explored is how ethnic hierarchy was created in Soviet society. Works from scholars like Khazanov[4], Silver[5], Slezkine[6], and Hagendoorn et al.[7] highlight how Soviet policies which aimed to promote socialism inadvertently led to establishing ethnic hierarchies. This part of Soviet society touches upon the dynamics of national identities, assimilation processes and effects following Sovietisation.

Bringing forth the example of religion-less education, the theoretical constructs that are of significance to this thesis are terms like the *homo sovieticus* concept. As discussed by Hagendoorn et al. this construct is a prime example of what Soviet governance was aiming to achieve at the expense of minorities' identities. The understanding of ethnicity and identity formation in the USSR are drawn from scholars such as Silver and Khazanov, who emphasise the importance of group identity and internal continuity of ethnic groups.

Sources and methods

Different terminology can be used to describe distinctions among Soviet citizens, however, each term can be argued to mean something different depending on the

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[3] Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. 'Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis'. *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): p.787.

[4] Anatoly Khazanov. 'The Ethnic Situation in the Soviet Union as Reflected in Soviet Anthropology'. Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Sovietique 31, no. 2 (1990): pp. 213–21.

[5] Brian Silver. 'Social Mobilization and the Russification of Soviet Nationalities'. The American Political Science Review 68, no. 1 (1974): pp. 45–66.

[6] Yuri Slezkine. 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism'. Slavic Review 53, no. 2 (1994): pp. 414–52.

[7] Hagendoorn, Louk, Rian, Sergey, and Joseph. 'Inter-Ethnic Preferences and Ethnic Hierarchies in the Former Soviet Union'. International Journal of Intercultural Relations: IJIR 22, no. 4 (1998): pp. 483–503.

argumentation or concept behind its usage. Following the debates regarding this terminology among scholars such as Weitz[8], Hirsch[9] and Weiner[10], Lemon's[11] reasoning regarding racialised Soviet politics is what will be closest aligned in this thesis. This being the concept of ethnicity and race being understood among Soviet citizens, however, the terms not being used in policy making or governance as to not practice imperial politics. Lemon's approach especially differs from Weitz, who unlike Lemon, focused on state level racialised policies. In contrast, Lemon's focus is on the micro-level analysis such as how language and daily interactions constructed racial identity. The significance behind Lemon's argument is that within certain interviews, distinctions among different ethnicities were made. For example, the interview in which a seventy-one-year-old Ukrainian man describes Georgians as hospitable and musical people, but that they do not like to work.[12] The interviewee concluded with that these traits are of the "southern people", hinting that the general Caucasus can be generalised with similar characteristics. In line with Lemon's view, these generalisations were more present among people in society, rather than spurred on by the government.

The link between Soviet Union influence spanning the early 1920s towards the 1940s and the establishing of ethnic hierarchy within the USSR will be explored using personal stories. These personal stories are in the form of interviews conducted with ex-Soviet Union citizens by the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. The Harvard Project is an archive of interview transcripts that have been conducted between 1950 and 1953. Soviet citizens who fled to (West) Germany and the United States were asked about their living conditions and experiences in the Soviet Union in order to understand Soviet society. As these interviewees had escaped prior to the interviews taking place, these stories are memories from approx. the 1920s to the 1940s spanning both Lenin's and Stalin's eras.

The Harvard Project has valuable information that hold the voices from the people directly affected by Soviet Union policies. Among the people that have been

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[8] Eric Weitz. 'Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges'. *Slavic Review* 61 (1) (2002). 1–29.

[9] Francine Hirsch. 'Race without the Practice of Racial Politics'. *Slavic Review* 61 (1) (2002). 30–43.

[10] Amir Weiner. 'Nothing but Certainty'. *Slavic Review* 61 (1) (2002). 44–53.

[11] Alaina Lemon. 'Without a "Concept"? Race as Discursive Practice'. *Slavic Review* 61 (1) (2002): p.56.

[12] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 454 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Male, 71, Ukrainian, Professor of physics. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.117.

interviewed were Russians, Ukrainians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Armenians and more. Their stories relating to their experiences in Soviet society or their interactions with others ethnicities say a lot about the dynamics that existed in that time. For example, the interview that was conducted with a 37-year-old Azerbaijani reveals how he felt towards the relationship between the Armenians and the Russians. "…there are minorities who don't like each other. For example, the Azerbaidzhanians and the Armenians. … Armenians have always gotten help from the Russians and worked against the Azerbaidzhanians."[13] What this reveals are that, while being in a Federation together, the Azerbaijanis felt distrust towards the Armenians and Russians concerning policy making. For cases where hidden evidence is present for certain arguments, the context of the conversation and historical background will be analysed to further unpack the interviewees' answer. This will be done using the reading against the grain method, which allows for a critical way to read the transcripts and find information that is not explicitly stated using historical background and context.

However, there are complications when it comes to using the Harvard project due to its reliance on people's memories. The ex-Soviet citizens were retelling their stories from years prior to the interview that had been recorded. The way in which people remember an event becomes artificial through storytelling from the moment of the event to the point the story is being told.[14] This could be seen in the way interviewees remembered Tsarist times in comparison to the Soviet era. While the comparisons that the interviewees made favoured the Tsarist regime, this showed that over time the interviewees could have forgotten negative experiences from Tsarist times in order to accentuate their dissatisfaction with the more recent memories of the Soviet Union. In addition, the issue of language and mistranslation persists. Most interviewees were interviewed in English, which was not their first language making it more difficult to express themselves. This was seen in the interviewees' choices of words, expressing certain terms and jargon in Russian rather than their mother tongue. Some interviewees said that they did not understand certain questions at all, which led to questions being left unanswered or having to be re-explained. In these cases, it

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13 Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 3, Case 24 (interviewer K.G., type A3). Male, 37, Azerbaidjan, Doctor. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.51.
14 Alistair Thomson. "Memory and Remembering in Oral History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. by Donald A. Ritchie. Oxford University Press, 2012. p.90.

is difficult to judge whether to understand the interviewees' standpoint for certain matters: "The Soviet policy on national minorities is to enslave all. It is all propaganda. (I mean what do you think not about Soviet politics in general, but about their politics in regard to the national minorities) I don't understand about national minorities."[15] In some cases, words that are not commonly used in today's Russian dictionary were used, such as the word "natseni" (locals), which is likely derived from the Russian root word "natsiya" (nation, people). This instance shows the importance of considering Soviet jargon and overall language in the establishment of ethnic hierarchy at the time. This paired with the interesting interview methods where interviewees were given vodka to "loosen up" the conversation are valid reasons of criticism to consider during the thesis research.[16]

The focus of the primary sources is to find relevant information regarding the three republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The way that these republics were being mentioned in combination with the information that is being told from the perspective of an ex-Soviet citizen are valuable information to understand the influence that USSR policies had on their lives. The way in which the primary sources I have collected thus far are through the key word searching function on the Harvard Project online archive. By using key words such as "Armenia/Armenian" or "minority" showcase transcripts where the interviewee talks about this topic. Interestingly, key terms such as "minority", "nationality" or "ethnicity" were present in interview questions and answers to describe other peoples, which in and of itself is something to be unpacked throughout the thesis and historiography.

Transcripts will be analysed and categorised based on the different themes that are covered in the interviewees' answers. The most important themes, such as religion, education and identity form the corpus in order to answer the sub-question for the respective thesis chapter. Once acquired, these transcripts are read to see what the context of the conversation is and how it led to this topic. However, throughout these transcripts the most insightful content is not only what has been noted down as answers, but everything around this information. To interpret these transcripts is to also consider the details of the interviewee, whether the interviewer

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[15] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 58 (interviewer F.W. and J.B., type A2. Male, 35 (estimate), Great Russian (Cossack), Tractorist/Stevedore. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.25-26.
[16] Sam Prendergast. 'Revisiting the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System'. *The Oral History Review* 44, no. 1 (2017): p.34.

had a distinct way of asking the questions or other things that could possibly have influenced the interview. At certain moments the third person perspective is used of the interviewer, as the interviewers sometimes filled in information about the interviewees that the interviewees themselves did not say. Another part of the interpreting is in considering what is not in the transcripts, as some details have been purposely left out by the interviewers for various reasons. The most notable example of these details is in the transcript where an Armenian woman's transcript is being interrupted to mention her going off on "another irrelevant discussion" as she "loved to talk".[17] Through these interviewer notes the perspective of gender plays a role in how the interviewee's answers are portrayed differently than male counterparts, or how certain information was deemed "irrelevant" in that time. In addition, a bias towards certain groups of people by the interviewers are another part of the source criticism. This can be seen in the example of the Tatar interviewee, who was deemed "not articulate" or "serious" because he was often late.[18] Hidden evidences like these open the discussion regarding the dynamic between interviewees and interviewers.

A corpus of transcripts that are varied in nature from the key words it consists of to the differences of the interviewees in age, gender, occupation and their level of anti-Soviet ideology are what will provide the most diverse information of how Soviet governance affected their experiences. Using an intersectional approach when analysing the interviewees' answers allows for a diverse corpus where different oppressive systems are covered.[19]

Historiography

The current situation regarding Russian aggression exerted towards Ukraine exposes the discussion in (post-) Soviet history about ongoing imperialism in scholarship and post-Soviet belonging. Similarly, the Caucasus area faces the effects from decades of Soviet rule and influence. The involvement of Russia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region

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[17] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 14, Case 266 (interviewer J.O., type A4). Female, 37, Armenian, Musician, housekeeper. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.10.
[18] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 16, Case 319 (interviewer M.F., type A4). Male, 25, Tatar. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.2.
[19] Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. 'Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies". (2013): p.787.

between Armenia and Azerbaijan is one of many examples of Russian imperialism and centrality within smaller republics of the Soviet Union. This thesis will explore these effects of the Soviet Union and its policies on the (Trans)Caucasus area after the incorporation of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in 1922.

To arrive at this point in the research, the literature reviewed in this thesis spans from the Soviet to post-Soviet periods. As Soviet Union history has changed over the course of decades, so has Western USSR historiography. Thus, the historiographical shift within the area of ethnicity research in the Soviet Union has shifted accordingly. Russia's greater influence within the Soviet Union is key to understand the ethnic hierarchy that affected Soviet citizens in society. In addition, Russia's portrayal as a hegemon within the Soviet Union in historiography adds a dimension to Russian imperialism over time which ultimately affects the smaller republics in the Caucasus negatively. The Caucasus region became a region that was forgotten for their own national identities but rather viewed as countries needing "saving" by a hegemon such as the USSR.[20] The lack in critical stance towards Russia and their involvement in shaping Soviet society, which was damaging to minorities, in and of itself is a greater problem within historiography.

The historiography of the Soviet Union in the 1980s was shaped by influential works that did not implement or consider the Caucasus story. Lewin's work on the collectivisation process during the 1920s described how the forced collectivisation affected the lives of peasants in the Soviet Union.[21] As he described this collectivisation era, he does not mention how the Caucasus experienced these changes differently.[22] Rather, his analysis described a centralised view of the Soviet Union and how this mainly affected Russian peasants.[23] Considering how agriculturally active the Caucasus region was, his mention of the area was limited despite the great influence forced collectivisation had on the peasants in the Caucasus. Similarly to Lewin's analysis, Kuromiya's description of collectivisation specifically mentioned Russian peasant's resistance to the collectivisation process.[24]

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[20] Ronald Grigor Suny. 2010. "The Pawn of Great Powers: The East–West Competition for Caucasia." *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 1 (1): p.11.
[21] Moshe Lewin. 1985. *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays on the Social History of Interwar Russia.* London, England: Routledge. pp.91-120.
[22] Ibid., pp. 91-120.
[23] Ibid., pp. 91-120.
[24] Hiroaki Kuromiya. 1988. *Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies: Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928-1931 Series Number 60.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. p.252.

While Lewin slightly mentions North Caucasus's resistance to collectivisation in one sentence, the Caucasus region as a whole is not mentioned in Kuromiya's research. This meant that, works like Lewin's and Kuromiya's did not implement the forgotten perspectives of the peasants of the Caucasus and thus continued to put Russia in a centralised role over smaller republics. In addition to collectivisation, Stalin's purges and overall governing were as described by Getty not made by individual decisions but were influenced by complicated group dynamics within the Party.[25] Similarly to Lewin and Kuromiya's works, the Caucasus perspective of Stalin's purges in the region remains unmentioned, and thus the Caucasus has no place in Soviet historiography yet again. Viola's work towards the end of the 1980s provided a new analysis of the accelerating collectivisation of the agricultural areas in the Northern Caucasus.[26] However, while this was new in its time of scholarship to pay attention to the Caucasus during the collectivisation period, this was done to highlight Moscow's centralised policies, not to understand the Caucasus perspective.[27]

This had a negative effect on the Caucasus voice in historiography to come, as revisionist during the 1990s and 2000s continued to centralise Russia. The revisionist movement in the 1980s prioritised social and cultural history, emphasising the from below stories of ordinary Soviet citizens.[28] This change from a previous totalitarian model of the Soviet Union (one that focused on dictatorship of the regime) to a more nuanced version of the regime that was complex and not monolithic.[29] However, Fitzpatrick did not take this opportunity to mention the stories of the Caucasus people, who also fit the role of "ordinary" Soviet citizens. As the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, revisionism in Soviet historiography became less prominent due to the opening of archives.[30] The opening of Soviet archives allowed for methodological changes in Soviet historiography, allowing more historians to conduct research and analyse Soviet documents. However, because of Russia's predominant role within the Soviet Union, these documents from the archives did not give space to the Caucasus voice.

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[25] John Archibald Getty. 1987. *Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies: Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938 Series Number 43.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. p.204.
[26] Lynne Viola. 1989. *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press. pp.27-28.
[27] Ibid., pp.27-28.
[28] Sheila Fitzpatrick. 2007. "Revisionism in Soviet History." *History and Theory* 46 (4): pp.77-78.
[29] Ibid., pp.77-78.
[30] "Really-Existing Revisionism?" 2001. *Kritika Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2 (4): p.709.

Even with the Soviet regime gone, the Caucasus remained marginalised because of decades of Russian led-Soviet rule. The continuation of Soviet historiography, even past the fall of the Soviet regime, continued to centre Russia as most of the archival sources centred Russia.

The concept of ethnicity within the Soviet Union has had different definitions depending on the angle taken to understand identity within Soviet society. Silver emphasised the importance of identifying oneself with a group as part of ethnic identity.[31] The importance of belonging to a group within ethnic identity, as Silver argues, implies the existence of people who identify differently than Soviet. Similarly, Khazanov pointed out that these groups passed down their ethnicity from generation to generation, culminating in their ethnic self-consciousness.[32] Khazanov further emphasised the way that the Soviet Union's understanding of ethnicity was focused on the internal and the continuity of the internal that carried over generations.[33] The way that people from an ethnicity feel towards their identity is thus linked to how much they feel connected to a group dynamic. For this reason, the "group" identity is an important part to find in the interviews, to see how or if this concept truly existed.

If we relate Khazanov to Silver's defining factor of ethnicity, the challenges that Bolsheviks faced regarding national demarcation over the duration of the late 1920s becomes more understandable. The Bolsheviks officials in Moscow saw these ethnic peoples that identified with their native land which were within the Soviet borders. Slezkine explained that because of this, the Bolsheviks recognised these groups and created ethnic territories for them, with the idea to promote socialism accordingly.[34] However, what this created was confusion amongst the Bolsheviks, seeing this decision as a way to encourage bourgeoisie nationalism.[35] These ethnic groups were entitled to their own land and encouraged to use their native language, with the intention to convince the peoples of the ethnic group towards socialism together.[36] The concept of ethnicity of the Bolsheviks in the 1920s of the Soviet Union was mainly that: a way towards socialism, no matter the group someone identified with. What this tells

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[31] Brian Silver. 'Social Mobilization and the Russification of Soviet Nationalities'. *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 1 (1974): p.46.
[32] Khazanov, 'The Ethnic Situation in the Soviet Union as Reflected in Soviet Anthropology'. p.214.
[33] Ibid., p.214.
[34] Yuri Slezkine. 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism'. *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): p.430.
[35] Ibid., p.414.
[36] Ibid., p. 430.

us is that the decisions taken regarding the authority and land that minorities acquired during the nativisation process were never fully for their benefit. Rather, the importance of spreading socialism remained superior over the well-being of minorities living in the USSR.

Correspondingly, Liber aligns with Slezkine's emphasis of native language usage. However, their stated reasoning is that urban development was encouraged among the agricultural republics within the Soviet Union.[37] With the usage of non-Russian languages among these ethnic identities came the national representatives of these respective republics and *korenizatsiia*, (or nativisation) aimed to empower these groups in governmental positions.[38] This encouragement for non-Russians had resulted into more conflict and confusion for both Russians and non-Russians, as they both had a different vision on nativisation.[39] The idea of non-Russian being favoured in the Soviet Union, both in the governmental and societal sense reversed the nativisation methods in the 1930s.[40] Ultimately, this meant the loss of acknowledgement for the native identity for ethnic groups and arguably the loss of acknowledgement for non-Russian ethnicities within the Soviet Union. Similarly, Koutaissoff argues the importance for non-Russian peoples to "catch up" with Central Russia in terms of development in education, government and economy.[41] However, the usage of the native language eventually changed back to the uniform usage of Russian across the different Soviet republics at the end of the 1930s. This change, according to Koutaissoff, was due to the inability to communicate between different congress members representing their respective Republic.[42] In addition, they argue that the teaching of Russian in non-Russian schools would ultimately benefit the Red Army in terms of scientific development, for now scientists were able to communicate more easily.[43] However, this reasoning ignores the rise in nationalism and anti-Russian sentiment by non-Russian peoples and so another reason as to why Russian became the state language. This shift in education and language usage already served as a precursor for developments towards a uniform Soviet citizen. The way

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[37] George Liber. '*Korenizatsiia:* Restructuring Soviet Nationality Policy in the 1920s'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14, no. 1 (1991): p.16.
[38] Ibid., p.16.
[39] Ibid., p 20.
[40] Liber, '*Korenizatsiia:* Restructuring Soviet Nationality Policy in the 1920s.' p.22.
[41] Elisabeth Koutaissoff. 'Literacy and the Place of Russian in the non-Slav Republics of the USSR'. *Soviet Studies* 3, no. 2 (1951): p.115.
[42] Ibid., p.123.
[43] Ibid., p.123.

that education changed for ethnic minorities will be analysed by uncovering their experiences in the Harvard Project interviews.

Tensions between non-Russians and Russian civilians arose and non-Russian peoples were being restricted in ways due to their identity.[44] Although the non-Russian republics were allowed self-determination and identity within their nation, it did not apply to those who migrated to Russia and expressed "nationalism".[45] Liber adds on to this, arguing that the non-Russian migrants, due to facing a foreign environment, held onto their non-Russian identity.[46] Eventually leading the Russian centre to believe that, because of nativisation, the Russian dominance was lost.[47] These rising tensions continued to add fuel to fire, and those of non-Russian identity were further seen as a threat to the socialist regime. The way that Shanin explained, the ethnic hierarchies were growing, and by 1942 the Russian identity was the one to be seen as superior, especially highlighted by Stalin's speech calling Russians the "leading people of the Soviet Union."[48] Past struggles of minorities seeking independence were once seen liberating, were now perceived as attempts of regressive relapses.[49] Geukjian, specialised in Caucasus studies, built upon this, stating that this discrimination towards the minority living in Russia strained inter-group relations.[50] This complete shift from *korenizatsiia* to Russian nationalism becoming the new alternative to socialism further aided the formation of an ethnic hierarchy existing in the Soviet Union.[51] During these developments, the dynamics between different ethnicities are especially interesting, as the perspective that Russians took on non-Russians could have originated from these developments in nationalism.

Moreover, Hagendoorn et al. argue that the rising tensions felt between both Russian and non-Russian groups within that time was due to the rising level of education the Russians were responsible for in the first place during the *korenizatsiia*

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[44] Chaim Shinar. 'The Role of the National Problem in the Disintegration of the Soviet Union'. *European Review (Chichester, England)* 21, no. 1 (2013): p.57.

[45] Ibid., p.57.

[46] Liber, '*Korenizatsiia:* Restructuring Soviet Nationality Policy in the 1920s.' p.17.

[47] Ibid., p.17.

[48] Teodor Shanin. 'Ethnicity in the Soviet Union: Analytical Perceptions and Political Strategies'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 3 (1989): p.419.

[49] Ibid., p.419.

[50] Ohannes Geukjian. *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy*. London: Routledge, 2016. pp.80-81.

[51] Shanin, 'Ethnicity in the Soviet Union: Analytical Perceptions and Political Strategies.' p.420.

period.[52] This development aided the rise in national consciousness for the smaller, non-Russian nations, resulting in a prominent perception of ethnic hierarchy.[53] Hagendoorn et al. argue that sovietisation became a de facto russification process, as non-Russians had to adapt to the *homo sovieticus*, or the ideal Soviet citizen.[54] Although this plan was inherently socialist, as the wish was to create equality among all Soviet citizens, the truth of the matter was that non-Russians had to conform to Moscow's rule with Russian culture and language being the unifying force.[55] The effect of this can be connected to Hagendoorn's research, using the Mokken scale to measure ingroup and intergroup relations among the Soviet Union ethnicities. While it does have to be noted that this research was conducted with students in the 1990s, the long-term effects of Russian nationalism that started the pre-war era aligns with the results of the ingroup preference the ethnic minorities had.[56] Minorities ranked their social distance with Russians to be the most preferred after their social distance within their own group.[57] Likewise, Cornell states that the creation of the *homo sovieticus* was a logical next step for the socialist regime. However, Cornell emphasised that the reason for this was for the Non-Russians to replace their ethnic or communal identities for the new, Soviet, identity.[58] According to Hagendoorn, both the Soviet and Russian identities share close similarities as analysed by both Hagendoorn et al. and Cornell. Despite the expectations in that the Russian/Soviet identity would be preferred by the non-Russian groups, whether through social distance or personal adaptation of the identity, the national always took precedence. The adaptation of a new identity for non-Russians was not something new, as ethnic reidentification through (forced) assimilation took place for a lot of the minority groups across the Soviet Union, more specifically focusing on Georgia.[59] As Cornell mentions, ethnic identity groups were linked to their territory, however, their territory was not homogenous.[60] The topic of territory and how ethnic identities are connected with these territories enforce the

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[52] Hagendoorn et al. 'Inter-Ethnic Preferences and Ethnic Hierarchies in the Former Soviet Union'. p.485.
[53] Ibid., p.485.
[54] Hagendoorn et al. 'Inter-Ethnic Preferences and Ethnic Hierarchies in the Former Soviet Union'. p.485.
[55] Ibid., p.485.
[56] Ibid., p.492.
[57] Ibid., p.493.
[58] Svante Cornell. 'Conflicting Identities in the Caucasus'. *Peace Review* 9, no. 4 (1997): p.453.
[59] Barbara Anderson and Brian Silver. 'Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity among Non-Russians in the USSR'. *Demography* 20, no. 4 (1983): p.462.
[60] Cornell, 'Conflicting Identities in the Caucasus.' p.453.

importance of borders within Caucasus countries. Identity formation and the connection to land is thus going to be a key point to research in the thematic chapter of the thesis.

Whereas Russification was a process that spread only the Russian identity, assimilation, or how Anderson calls it "reidentification", caused for a lot of minority groups to assimilate to "bigger" or "more preferred" identities like in this case Georgian.[61] Similarly, this would happen for mid-sized identities as well, for example, the reidentification from Georgian to most often chosen, Russian.[62] The difference in these processes is that unlike Russification, reidentification left the space open for Caucasus ethnicities. The pattern of reidentification of non-Russians showed that there was a hierarchy followed for the bettering of their position within Soviet society, potentially influenced by the homo sovieticus concept. This pattern is especially interesting to consider what then the general patterns were and thus the hierarchy for minorities to assimilate to. This "ladder" of ethnicities can be potentially found in the interviews through further reading in the transcripts.

Similarly to the homo sovieticus, Kotkin describes "speaking Bolshevik" as a concept that the regime forced into workplaces and other parts of Soviet society so the Bolshevik ideology so that all citizens aligned with it accordingly.[63] This was done mostly through language by enforcing Soviet (deriving from the Russian language) terms so that citizens conformed to the common Soviet jargon and ideology.[64] This thesis adopts the homo sovieticus concept, as it allows for a broader understanding of the Soviet identity beyond work ethics or Bolshevik ideology. The homo sovieticus, unlike speaking Bolshevik, allows for a comprehensive comparison between the Caucasus identity and Soviet identity that not only focuses on language, but also religion.

Geukjian explained that the three nations of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were always seen by Moscow as a part of theirs, incorporating the three respective countries with the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic (TFSSR).[65] Geukjian added that with this development, Moscow ignored the ethnic and religious

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[61] Anderson and Silver. 'Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity among Non-Russians in the USSR.' p.462.
[62] Ibid., p.463.
[63] Stephen Kotkin. 1997. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 225-226
[64] Ibid., pp.225-226.
[65] Geukjian, '*Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus.*' p.86.

differences among the Caucasus people, considering the measures to be "uniting".[66] Again, the influence from Moscow were never fully understanding of the non-Russian people, but for the self-interest of the union. Blank interjects and highlights how Russians were afraid of Pan-Turkism moving towards the Caucasus, a previously Russian Empire owned area.[67] With this fear, the adoption of the Transcaucasian states was purely out of own self-interest, yet disguised as bringing peace to the region as Geukjian argues. Geukjian also mentions that, especially once Stalin became responsible for the smaller republics of the Soviet Union, decided to ignore the Transcaucasian ethnic differences and therefore their territorial disputes.[68] This ignorance has arguably aided in many of Transcaucasia's contemporary geo-political problems, namely of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. The conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh can be understood more within the context of Soviet ignorance and misunderstandings of border disputes, which heightened Armenian-Azerbaijani tensions especially considering the way both groups identified with that territory. With this in mind, the conflict will be researched with a nuanced perspective aided by potential tensions picked up in the interviews from multiple viewpoints.

Blank's arguments on the Caucasus justifies Moscow's ignorant and even destructive actions. This can be noted in the way that the Caucasus and Central Asian countries are labelled "culturally backwards", suggesting that these regions needed correcting done by Soviet Union policies.[69] Even literature more recent than Blank's, like Nation in 2015, agrees with this perspective, as they mention that development in the region slowed down after the fall of the Soviet Union.[70] These perspectives can continue to cause misunderstandings and justify forced Sovietisation on the Caucasus people to "educate" region or that they are unstable without the Soviet regime. As can be understood by Henze, the Caucasus was treated as an unstable region and Moscow forced their own ruling onto the Caucasus, at the disadvantage of the local people.[71] The way that Transcaucasia's tensions amongst the three nations were ignored by Stalin in the 1920s served as a precursor to the regions developments later

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[66] Geukjian, '*Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus.*' p.86.
[67] Stephen Blank. 'The Formation of the Soviet North Caucasus 1918–24'. *Central Asian Survey* 12, no. 1 (1993): p.17.
[68] Geukjian, '*Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus.*' p.86.
[69] Blank, 'The Formation of the Soviet North Caucasus 1918–24.' p.17.
[70] Craig Richard Nation. "Russia and the Caucasus." *Connections* 14, no. 2 (2015): p.3.
[71] Paul Bernard Henze. 1996. "Russia and the Caucasus." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 19 (4): p.391.

in the twentieth century. Geukjian concludes that these acts of ignorance on Moscow's part have been noted in Soviet history as the "lesser" evil by comparison to the Russian Empire.[72] Non-Russians' resistance, like the Transcaucasian resistance at the end of the Russian Civil War, was seen as reactionary and avoidant of the path towards progressive development.[73] Russia, seen as the "elder brother", was portrayed as such by its own historicists due to state censorship, ultimately affecting Soviet historiography.[74] In contemporary times, Soviet/Russian history arguably still sees these lasting effects of Russian Imperialistic ideals. This thesis aims to pay special attention to imperial imbued language within historiography or the answers of Russian interviewees to see how Russian Imperialism had a lasting presence throughout history.

Mogilner words it beautifully in her call for decolonisation within the field of Soviet/Russian history: "Putin's national-imperial fantasies may look crazy in the proposed arrangement and as a pretext for the war, but at a structural level they correlate perfectly with the most fundamental narratives in our field, both here and in Russia."[75] This thesis, focused on the position of ethnic minorities from the Caucasus, aims to achieve this objective and further contribute to a historiography free from Russian Imperialism.

The Soviet Union and its policies have left a lasting impact on the Caucasus in ways that can be seen today. Ethnic hierarchy within Soviet society have further caused implications for minority groups in the Caucasus, from geo-political issues like worsened Armenian-Azerbaijani relations to the lasting Russian imperialism expressed through Russian aggression towards Ukraine. Silver's theory regarding how to frame ethnicity within the Soviet Union context illustrates the importance of the group identity, which aids the understanding of the rise in non-Russian nationalism within Russia as highlighted by Slezkine. Group identity is especially of significance for researching groups within an ethnically diverse country like Georgia, where national demarcation influenced contemporary ethnic based districts.

Further, I connect the rise of nationalism with the way *korenizatsiia* influenced ethnic consciousness as pointed out by Shinar. The *korenizatsiia* process, meant to

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[72] Henze.'Russia and the Caucasus.' p.89.
[73] Geukjian, '*Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus.*' p.89.
[74] Ibid., p.89.
[75] Marina Mogilner. 'There Can Be No "Vne"'. *Slavic Review*, 2022. Accessed 19-02-2024

empower minorities, eventually aided the ethnic differentiation among non-Russians and Russians alike, sparking resentment towards minorities living in Russia. Shinar's argument regarding the difference between Caucasus nationalism in the Caucasus and in Russia encourages me to also look past borders and understand the way that Caucasus peoples were impacted in the cities of Russia. This difference allows for an analysis on how Caucasus-ness outside of the region, specifically in Russia, was seen as something negative compared to if this remained far from Russian society.

Finally, the Caucasus in and of itself within Soviet historiography exemplifies the ethnic hierarchy ultimately created by Soviet Union policies. The ignorance highlighted by Geukjian in the incorporation of the Caucasus region set a precedence for the continuing disregard expressed towards the Caucasus people through suppressing their identity with the *homo sovieticus* concept. The impact on policies and the way history was remembered in a censored environment are significant factors that compel me to confront and further place this thesis within a historiography tainted with imperialism towards my identity.

Chapter 1, Religion

Introduction

The Soviet Union's atheist propaganda and its consequences caused harm to the Caucasus region in particular. In an effort to erase religion, religious institutions were destroyed and religion had to be practised within the home in secrecy to prevent arrest. The removal of religion in turn backfired on the state, as people not only resisted by practising in secrecy, they resisted by strengthening their non-Russian identity through religion. Religion, in this chapter, will be used as a theme to explore the resistance of interviewees of the Harvard Project in times of heavily enforced atheism by the Bolshevik state. The concept of self-determination and identity of Caucasus groups will be explained using the experiences of interviewees of whom the majority continued to practise religion as an act of resistance. Towards the end of the chapter, the "homo sovieticus" concept will be introduced to serve as an initial framework to understand Russian influence on minority groups. Coined to describe the negative aspects of conformity and dehuminisation under Soviet rule, the homo sovieticus is the culmination of the ideal Soviet citizen. Within the context of religion, this ideal Soviet citizen was atheist and did not practise any religious traditions. This concept will be further elaborated on in future chapters forming a major aspect for the exploration of non-Russian identity within the Soviet Union. The worsening Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the annexation of the Caucasus serves as a case study to demonstrate how atheist propaganda continued to intensify tensions through its ignorance of the region.

Atheist state propaganda affected people's lives in multiple ways, from education to work life and most notably their private connection to faith without the presence of (public) religious institutions such as mosques. The Bolsheviks, after many Church raids in Soviet Russia, spread atheist ideology throughout the Soviet Union.[76] In the case of the Chechens and the Ingush, two Muslim North Caucasus tribes, their mosques were destroyed in 1944 by the state to eradicate religion.[77] The state's aim was to deprive the Muslim population from accessing religious institutions, ultimately

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[76] Edward Roslof. 2003. *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946.* Bloomington, MN: Indiana University Press. p.48.
[77] Marie Broxup. 'Islam and Atheism in the North Caucasus'. *Religion in Communist Lands* 9, no. 1 (1981): p.40.

attempting to get rid of the religion all together.[78] This same process within Russia led to similar fate, where the influence of anti-religious propaganda permeated different aspects of people's lives such as in their education, work environment and with neighbours. Following these developments, the number of believers declined after the Bolshevik revolution from 90% of the Russian population in 1914 over the age of sixteen with religious convictions to 35% in 1954.[79] However, although it is difficult to say exactly if the anti-religious state propaganda led to the decline of believers in Russia, the same cannot be said in the Caucasus countries when it comes to identifying with a religion. As found in the interviews used for this chapter, it was quite the opposite. Anti-religious propaganda and the destruction of mosques led to the increase of nationalism and violence towards the USSR state.[80] What can be seen here is that taking away public religious institutions had the opposing effects comparing the Caucasus region, which is known as a religiously diverse area, with Orthodox Russia.

Orthodox criticism and its role in Bolshevik Anti-Religious propaganda

Because of this, a link between Orthodoxy and the shift to Bolshevism was made, blaming Orthodoxy in Russian society for leading to the censorship of religious practices, symbols and traditions. As explained by the 71-year old Ukrainian: "They [the Orthodox religion] did not show the practice of a Christian life."[81] He continued on explaining: "…they [the Russians] had no religion, no priests, and they had no basic religious education. They did not love to read the bible."[82] The interviewee blamed the Orthodox Russian church for its lack of proper Christian teachings, which manifested in the dissatisfaction Russian citizens felt towards religion in general. The continuous violence that the government sent towards religious groups understandably made most people lose interest and leave the Orthodox church.[83] One possible interpretation is that one may mistakenly see these developments as the Orthodox community not

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[78] Broxup. 'Islam and Atheism in the North Caucasus.' p.40.
[79] David Powell. 'The Effectiveness of Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1967). p.368.
[80] Broxup, 'Islam and Atheism in the North Caucasus.' p.41.
[81] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 454 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Male, 71, Ukrainian, Professor of physics. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.55.
[82] Ibid., p.64.
[83] William Husband. 'Soviet Atheism and Russian Orthodox Strategies of Resistance, 1917-1932'. *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 1 (1998). p.107.

being strong enough to resist the Bolsheviks' anti-religious propaganda. However, the persistence of believers was strong, and through countless of interviewees' experiences it can be understood that religion was still commonly practiced, but in secrecy. The shift from an Orthodox to Atheist society as a result of the revolution is multi-faceted and complex, and cannot be related to the ways Orthodoxy was practiced. Rather, the Bolsheviks were set on rejecting every institution that held authority, and the Russian Orthodox church happened to be of such an institution.

The critique against Orthodoxy in particular was present among other Christians. Similarly, this also the case for the Caucasus Christians, as the Georgian interviewee describes her view of the different Christian streams: "…it is impossible to make an atheist out of me. But I criticize all churches – the orthodox because it is too soft, the catholic because it practices politics, the protestant because it is not a church at all."[84] The statement regarding Orthodoxy being too "soft" can be related to the freedom that came with being an Orthodox Christian, in the eyes of a Russian interviewee. "If a Russian does not go to church for a year, no one will ask him why he has not been to church. … The Russian's faith is absolutely voluntary."[85] Understanding the "freedom" that came from the Russian Orthodox church provides a comparative element with the Caucasus religions. As the Russian lifestyle was dominant within the Soviet Union, one that had roots in Orthodox Christianity, religions such as Islam, Judaism or other forms of Christianity contrasted with the dominant identity. While Orthodoxy and its characteristics were viewed regarded differently depending on personal preference, the outcome was the same in that it led to the destruction of religious institutes by the Bolsheviks. However, the criticisms of the Orthodox church were then seen as the cause for the Bolsheviks to reject religion because they saw it as unjust.

Although Russian dominance was prominent within the Caucasus, Orthodoxy in particular remained criticised amongst other religious streams. In the case of the Georgian interviewee, she explained her perception of the Russians amidst the anti-religious campaign: "I am convinced that if Russia were a Catholic country, it could throw Stalin over. The same is true if it were a Moslem or Jewish country. It is the Russian Orthodox church which teaches submission and passivity."[86] The notion that Orthodoxy teaches submission coincides with the

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[84] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule B, Vol. 18, Case 472 (interviewer H.B.). Widener Library, Harvard University. p.26.

[85] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 29, Case 629 (interviewer S.H., type A4). Female, 36, Great Russian, Movie technician. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.28.

[86] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 472 (interviewer S.H., type A4). Female, 34, Georgian, NKVD agent, jurist, journalist. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.24.

views of the Ukrainian and Russian interviewees. A possible interpretation of this can be that believers across the Soviet Union, specifically Christians, saw the anti-religious campaigns as defeat of the Orthodox church. This notion included the character of Russians, as mentioned by the Georgian interviewee: "The Russians, as a result of their religious training, are fatalists and are passive. If the Russians could only learn to fight their inner fatalism, they would be better off."[87] Russians, who were responsible for spreading Bolshevik ideology and annexing the Caucasus into the Soviet Union, were thus seen as fatalists who did not fight for religion enough.

The impact of Bolshevik Anti-Religious propaganda

The Bolsheviks' anti-religious propaganda led to the domestication of faith as people stopped practicing religion in public spheres in fear of punishment.[88] Domestication, as Dragadze describes, can be considered in two ways: the shift from the public sphere of religious practice to the private sphere of the home and the lessening of specialists in religion such as priests.[89] In this case, the domestication of religion meant to take control over the way religion was practiced with the secret sphere of people's homes, safe from punishment or public humiliation.[90] This public humiliation and fear of showing any ties with the Church greatly affected people's lives through their education, social status and working relations. Especially evident in the way a Russian interviewee expressed that there were no religious symbols in her house while she was young. It is likely the people from the Caucasus thus shared a similar experience: "There was an icone only in babushka's room, because if people came to the house, and saw an icone in the house, then it might be bad for mama or papa at work."[91] A similar experience was mentioned by another interviewee in a school setting: "…But in school the students who went to church were made fun of, and … were questioned to find out if they knew other students who were going to church or … had icons in their houses."[92] Bolshevik ideology regarding religion influenced the

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[87] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 472 (interviewer S.H., type A4). Female, 34, Georgian, NKVD agent, jurist, journalist. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.24.

[88] Tamara Dragadze. 'Chapter 9 The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism'. In *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice*, edited by C. M. Hann. London: Routledge, 1992. p.144.

[89] Ibid., p.144.

[90] Ibid., p.144.

[91] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 438 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Female, 28, Great Russian, Student. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.26

[92] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 24, Case 477 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 25, Great Russian, Student. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.34.

church and its believers to be secretive of their practices and therefore took on the roles of religious specialists, instead of fully distancing themselves from the religion entirely. Here, the Bolshevik anti-religious propaganda had unintentionally backfired on them.

Bolshevik atheism as an act of creating equality within the USSR proved to have the opposing effect as it failed to include the Muslim community. Anti-religious propaganda of the affected the Muslim population similarly as those of Christian faith. However, the implications of anti-religious governance influenced the Muslim community differently in practice compared to the Christian population. Atheist propaganda was meant to completely erase traces of religious connections within different groups. Although as mentioned previously, this forcible taking away of religion within one's identity proved to have the opposing effect for Muslims as it led to inequality and as a result of this, rising feelings of nationalism. In certain cases, Muslims' educations and therefore careers were greatly affected due to their continuous devotion to their religious beliefs. This restriction of Muslim's education could especially be seen in the Chechen interviewee's experience: "The Soviet regime wants the children to have *komvospitanie* (Communist upbringing). It wants to have the children under the influence only of the teacher and not of the parents. This education is not religious. It denies God. My children did not go to school as result of this."[93] In a similar case, a Chechen interviewee explained his difficulties to become a military officer: "I wanted to be a military officer but no matter how well I fought, the Russians did not give me an opportunity to become one. My inability to write correctly is due to the fact that I taught myself and was not able to go to school."[94] A possible interpretation of his experience is that his religion withheld him from being able to go to school, either through discrimination or out of his own will due to atheist education. In contrast, the Russian interviewee who described having Christian icons in her grandmother's room followed secondary education despite her and her family's relation to faith. "Mama always wanted me first to get a good education. … Mama said that God must be within oneself, and not for other people."[95] In this case, Christian families were less likely to withhold their children from receiving education, despite its

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[93] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.27.
[94] Ibid., p.22.
[95] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 438 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Female, 28, Great Russian, Student. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.23.

atheist nature, compared to Muslim families. Thus, atheist propaganda within education ended up alienating the Muslim population more and therefore set back a group from society.

Both atheist and religious people resisted anti-religious Bolshevik propaganda as it restricted parts of their non-Russian identity. Throughout the closing of religious institutions, certain buildings remained. An interviewee of Avar origin, belonging to an ethnic group in the North Caucasus and associated with current Dagestan, explained: "First I studied for two years in an Arabian church school, … There I studied the Koran."[96] When asked if this school was established by the Soviet government, the interviewee responded: "No, it had been there since Tsarist time."[97] Was the interviewee fled, he was detained by the Germans who believed he was a Jew. "I told the Germans that they were wrong, that I was not a Jew but a Mohammedan (Muslim). … So, they took me to a Tartar clergyman, who asked me to read two prayers in Arabic. …the second one was not so good because it had been such a long time since I had read these prayers. You know in the Soviet Union that is not allowed."[98] What we can see in this interaction is that the interviewee had his access to scriptures and prayers restricted by the regime which led to him forgetting parts of his faith. In contrast, a Cherkessian interviewee distanced himself from Islam: "My family was religious … I myself don't recognise religion. … This, my feeling about religion, was not by Soviet propaganda."[99] Soviet rule, through atheist propaganda, restricted the religious freedom and identity of a larger part of the population. In return, this backfired in two different forms of resistance; identifying more strongly with their religion in secrecy, and resisting the system even after stepping away from religion.

Religion and marriage in an atheist society

Despite the official rejection of religion within Soviet society, a hierarchy among faiths persisted which influenced the aspects of people's lives, from interfaith marriages to the upbringing of children. Hierarchy among different religions can be seen in the Russian interviewee's answers. "As to the Soviets, in no country does this make as

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[96] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.53.
[97] Ibid., p.53.
[98] Ibid., p.4.
[99] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 18, Case 344 (interviewer M.L., type A4). Male, 26, Cherkessian. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.26.

little difference as in the Soviet Union. Take marriage, they absolutely do not care at all whether a Russian is marrying a Tatar or a Russian is marrying a Ukrainian."[100] "Tatar" is an umbrella term for the different Turkic speaking groups and is a Russian exonym as these groups lived in different parts of the Russian Empire. Tatars, who are Muslim, are compared with Ukrainians within the interviewees' answer. Thus, this comparison not only highlights that interethnic marriage was not seen as taboo, but also emphasizes that interfaith marriage was similarly accepted. In the case of the female Russian interviewee, she mentioned that her husband is Balkar, a Turkic group who closely identify with Islam and primarily inhabit the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, which is a region in the North Caucasus. Their marriage was of interethnic and interfaith (Christian Orthodox-Sunni Muslim) nature, and their experience showed the dynamic within religious hierarchy. Their two children, originally meant to be raised Christian and Muslim respectively where the daughter would adopt the mother's religion and the son his father's, were ultimately baptised as to avoid judgement. Here, the decision for the children to take on the mother's Christian faith was not explained further. However, the assumption that hierarchy among religions where a Christian upbringing was accepted more than a Muslim one can be made.

In the case of Caucasus minorities, one's faith and nationality were more interlinked within one identity compared to Russians or Ukrainians. Taking for example the Armenians and their close ties to Christianity as with the Tatars who are predominately Muslim. This is reaffirmed in the answers of a Russian female interviewee speaking on the religions within the USSR: "The Caucasian people support their religion more. If they marry a Russian they want the wife to take their own religion. But a Russian or Ukrainian more easily agrees to taking on the religion of someone else."[101] In contrast, a Chechen interviewee mentioned: "The Russian people are very coarse. They want you to submit to them and regard them as being higher than you."[102] Here it can be understood that the aspect of religion within marriage is prioritised by Caucasus people, however, being Russian meant being more dominant in other aspects of Soviet society. In addition, being Russian did not

[100] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 438 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Female, 28, Great Russian, Student. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.57.
[101] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 438 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Female, 28, Great Russian, Student. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.58.
[102] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.44.

always mean being an Orthodox Christian, whereas Caucasians were regarded for their religion as part of their heritage. An example of the blurred lines between ethnicity and religion can be seen in a later statement of the Chechen: "The Ukrainians have their own language, and the Moslems have their own."[103] Here being Muslim was regarded in a similar fashion as being Ukrainian, a nationality. Religion, specifically in the case for Caucasus religion, was as important as one's ethnic heritage.

Religion and its part within the Caucasus identity

The marginalisation of minorities who faced potential displacement was a reason for a strong Caucasus identity that is composed of both cultural and religious aspects. When asked about the future his parents saw for him, the 54-year old Chechen explained: "My parents always wanted me to have an Arabic course in the Caucasus. In our village, they sent me to the Mullah and wanted me to be religious."[104] The Chechen identity can be seen passed from generation to generation through, in this case, a Muslim upbringing. Similarly, when asked about the interviewee's children, he wished for a similar future: "I always give them councel [sic] to believe in God, and be religious and get along with people well."[105] What can be seen here is that the collective Chechen group identity, as Silver emphasised, not only included being from the Chechen-Ingush region, but being Muslim as well.[106] The reason for this strong sense of identity here for the Chechen was to contrast the dominant opposite; the Slavic Orthodox identity.[107] In addition, religion was a part of the Chechen identity passed down generations, to lose this aspect meant losing a sense of the Chechen identity.

Despite the anti-religious propaganda, religious people in the Caucasus continued to practise their religion in secret. Similarly, the Avaret interviewee highlights the resistance of religious people: "I always prayed and took part in the celebration of our [Muslim] holidays. But this was impossible under the Soviet regime. …It is true of the majority of the people in the Soviet Union that they are still religious, in spite of

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103 Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.45.
104 Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.22.
105 Ibid., p.23.
106 Silver Brian. 'Social Mobilization and the Russification of Soviet Nationalities'. *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 1 (1974): p.46.
107 Ibid., p.46.

everything that the regime has done."[108] In the Caucasus region, particularly in the North, many ethnic groups experienced displacements and population loss because of Soviet governance. This can be seen in the Chechen interviewee's answer: "I heard that my wife and the two children were exiled as was the whole village. This was prior to the liquidation of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic."[109] According to Cornell, physical territory and borders are a present part of the Caucasus identities.[110] In the experiences of the interviewees, however, religion within identity reveal the importance of the spiritual identity rather than a physical territory. As a way to combat identity loss, their identity consisted not only of their regional origin, but also with their religious connection.

The relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan worsened because of anti-religious propaganda and the consistent ignorance from the state in Moscow. The Soviet Union, with its various forms of propaganda, intended to calm the region by enforcing atheist laws and remove all aspects of identity under the guise of "Soviet brotherhood".[111] Here, the homo sovieticus served as a way to mediate the Armenians and Azerbaijanis in particular, so that there would be no more disputes that the State perceived to be linked to religion. This perception in particular can be seen in the answer of a Russian interviewee: "…the Turks were not friendly with the Armenians, the Armenians were not friendly with the Georgians. These disputes had a purely religious base."[112] However, in the case of the Cossack interviewee, who lived in the Caucasus, stated: "For more than 30 years there is a bloody war between them [Armenians and Mohammedane] which is not based on politics."[113] In fact, these disputes were neither religious nor political, but were based on the distribution of territory.[114] Through this ignorance from the state, atheist propaganda, as Silver had argued, strengthened the Armenian and Azerbaijani identities and tensions continued

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[108] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.34.
[109] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.23.
[110] Cornell, 'Conflicting Identities in the Caucasus.' p.453.
[111] Geukjian, '*Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus.*' p.86.
[112] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 451 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 55, Great Russian, Theatrical artist (stage designing). Widener Library, Harvard University. p.63.
[113] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 54 (interviewer M.F., type A3). Male, 57, Cossack, Peasant. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.28.
[114] Geukjian, '*Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus.*' p.86.

to rise from growing nationalism.[115] The South Caucasus countries were neglected when it came to their underlying issues regarding their contrasting identities. High-ranking figures predetermined their mediator role meant to "save" the Caucasus region. "Often they say, yes, if the Caucasus were independent we would cut each other's throats. Then we would have to ask the Russians to come to keep the peace."[116]

In contrast, Sovietisation in the Caucasus region was a way to combat nationalism, but in turn strengthened the group identity of Soviet resistance. Religion, in turn, also became a form or part of this resistance. Religious traditions, such as Ramadan for example, were forbidden to take part in. Despite this, villages found ways to form an alliance together and find ways to continue certain practices in secret. "People would come from Arabia or Turkey … Some holy man would come into a village and gather a few trusted people around him. He would tell them just how many days it was until the fast began and for how many days it was to continue. This is the kind of connection between people which is the most common in the Soviet Union."[117] Religious traditions, forbidden by the regime, became a way for villages to build trust and continue to resist Soviet governance. In a similar case of the Ghari village in Georgia, the villagers carried out religious traditions themselves through difficult times as material promises made by the Soviet state remained unfulfilled.[118] Soviet censorship and influence led to the strengthening of group identity through religion to continue their resistance.

The favouritism that the regime showed for Russian or Slavic culture could be seen throughout the censorship of other (marginalised) voices, which sparked feelings of resistance. Despite the preaching for equality among all peoples within the USSR, Caucasus languages, traditions and culture suffered the biggest blows in order to acclimate to "Soviet" culture. From the perspective of an Armenian interviewee, she mentioned how Russians simply added the label of "Soviet" on Russian culture: "Ballet, music and theatre in Russia is Russian and not Soviet. It is Russian talent and

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[115] Silver, 'Social Mobilization and the Russification of Soviet Nationalities'. p.46.
[116] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 438 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Female, 28, Great Russian, Student. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.58
[117] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.48.
[118] Dragadze, 'Chapter 9 The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism', p.146.

traditions … . There is nothing new that the Soviets have contributed to the arts."[119] The Sovietised, and therefore Russified, space that the regime created further aided the resistance for national identity in the Caucasus. "National cultures have been almost annihilated. … The other people will never submit to them. Each nation tries to have its independence."[120]

During these times of resistance, Stalin added fuel to fire by naming the Russian population the "leading people of the Soviet Union.[121] Although many Russians also identified to continue practicing (Orthodox) Christianity in secrecy, they were prioritised more compared to the countless ethnicities of the Caucasus. Stalin's favouritism, disguised under communist equality, equated to the discrimination of the Caucasus identity. "It is impossible to separate Stalin and the Soviet structure."[122] Despite the regime's anti-religious propaganda, which also in turn was pro-Russian propaganda for the minorities in the Caucasus, Stalin was not able to eradicate religion. "Stalin has never changed my religious feelings in the least."[123]

Russian favouritism, despite the insistence of equality among all nationalities, greatly affected religious minority groups seen throughout purges and in gulags. During the purges that happened under Stalin's rule, many of the people affected were of minority groups. An important detail to note is the intention behind these purges and how they differed between Slavic and non-Slavic peoples. "The same is true with Georgians, Armenians, Tartars and other national minorities. Stalin struggles to make Ukrainians, White-Russians, Armenians etc. the same as Great Russians. But it does not work and therefore he tortures them in different ways."[124] Among the different nationalities mentioned, all except the Tartars are connected to Christianity as part of their identity. In this case, religious identity that differs the most from Russian Orthodoxy, such as Islam, brings a disadvantage in society. However, when asked regarding which nationalities (Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, Armenians) have

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[119] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 33, Case 266/(NY)1313 (interviewer T.E., type A4). Female, 49, Armenian, Bookkeeper. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.72.

[120] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 3, Case 24 (interviewer K.G., type A3). Male, 37, Azerbaidjan, Doctor. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.43.

[121] Teodor Shanin. 'Ethnicity in the Soviet Union: Analytical Perceptions and Political Strategies'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 3 (1989): p.419.

[122] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 17, Case 335 (interviewer K.G., type A4). Male, 31, Jewish, Doctor. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.52.

[123] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.34.

[124] Ibid., p.65.

less trouble with the NKVD, an Belorussian interviewee responded: "Armenians are in the worst position."[125] While different interviewees mention how nationality did not matter in society, having a factor that differed greatly from the dominant Russian identity through religion proved to be a certain setback for some, but it was not exclusive to Muslim citizens. In fact, all non-Russian citizens had to adapt to what is now known as the homo sovieticus, an identity meant to stimulate the model Soviet citizen in Moscow's terms.[126] This model, served as a silent example for all USSR citizens, created hierarchy within society, with those mirroring the homo sovieticus the best closest at the top. Non-Russian minority groups, especially those who were not Orthodox, faced difficulties to adapt to the atheist Soviet identity, which was heavily modelled off of the Russian identity.

Conclusion

The Soviet Union's approach regarding religion through its anti-religious propaganda were both harmful and purposeful with unintended consequences to the Caucasus region. Atheism, which stemmed from the criticisms found in the Orthodox church, was a way for the Bolsheviks to spread socialist ideology across the Union. Forced state atheism led to the secrecy of practicing religion within the home without the presence of religious institutions, which dealt damage to people's religious identity. The greater issue here, is the restriction of identity within minority groups, who felt closely tied to their religion as part of their identity. Anti-religious propaganda, aiming to remove injustice that stemmed from religion, backfired which led to increased nationalism and resistance among religious groups. In a union where ones national identity was meant to be replaced with the Soviet identity, religion served as a means to connect with one's heritage spiritually rather than territorially. In the end, minorities from the Caucasus continued to practice religion as acts of resistance, albeit in secrecy.

Moreover, the favouritism towards a Russian, atheist identity manifested in the homo sovieticus image, a model for the perfect Soviet citizen. This model was based on the Russian identity, projecting a preference for the Slavic identity throughout the USSR. Identities that strayed away from this homo sovieticus were seen as enemies

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[125] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 34, Case 380/(NY)1460 (interviewer J.F., type A4). Male, 32, Byelorussian, Ship stoker. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.24.
[126] Hagendoorn et al. 'Inter-Ethnic Preferences and Ethnic Hierarchies in the Former Soviet Union'. p.485.

of the state more often and thus punished by being sent to concentration camps. This preference for the Russian identity caused for hostilities to arise against the state and among minority groups. Especially seen in the Caucasus countries, more specifically Armenia and Azerbaijan. The continuous ignorance to understand the tensions between the two republics further drove them away from reconciling, as their identities were being undermined through anti-religion laws. In an act of mediation, the differences between Armenians and Azerbaijanis were meant to be erased through socialist ideology. However, this only strengthened nationalism as an act of resistance against each other and the state, with religious practise playing a major role in asserting self-determination.

Chapter 2, Education

Introduction

Propaganda in the education system was a tool for the regime to recruit young people into the Party which greatly affected the careers of the Caucasus people. Stalin's legacy resulted in Russian and Ukrainian citizens to misunderstand the Caucasus and ultimately see them as favoured by Stalin as a reason for the education they received. These misconceptions regarding favouritism from Stalin turned out to be the opposite through the perspective of the people in the Caucasus; they were marginalised, forced to assimilate to Soviet policy and deceived. The education system that spread communist messaging throughout the Soviet Union, as explained by the Caucasus people, showed that they were ultimately forced to assimilate. Among these ways of assimilation were the mandatory Russian classes, the mandatory partaking in the Komsomol (political communist youth party) for career benefits and the rewriting of their history to fit the Russian saviour complex.

The rewriting of Caucasus history by the Russians serves as a precursor for the continuation of this chapter, as the history, present and future of the Caucasus people were in the hands of the communist regime through the education system. As a form of comparison, pre-Soviet era policies were mentioned by interviewees as more preferable, because it allowed them to have agricultural freedom, something which was highly valued by the Caucasus people. The Caucasus identity, which consisted of agricultural activity as explained by the interviewees, was taken away from them in place for political involvement. Throughout the chapter the Caucasus identity in education was dismissed by the state through propaganda, which in turn made the unity among Caucasus nationalities stronger.

Perceptions and misconceptions, the influence of Stalin's legacy in the Caucasus

Misconceptions regarding the Caucasus people having supposed privileges made them seem more favoured over other nationalities in regards to education. "A friend once told me that the Georgians SSR had a higher percent of people in higher education than the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic], 11% compared to 7%. Why? Because Stalin is from Georgia. …they had less education

and privileges in Tsarist times."[127] Russians claimed that the reason as to why more Georgians were in higher education was the relation between Stalin and his Georgian heritage. The comparison to Tsarist times implies that there were less opportunities for the Georgians to have higher education compared to during the Soviet Union, as well as being more privileged because of Stalin. When asked regarding the equality among minorities, a Russian interviewee pointed out: "It is easier for them [Caucasus people] to get an education then [sic] for the Russians. For example, the people in the Caucasus can get an education much easier than the Russians."[128] The quality of education however remained unmentioned, which means it is difficult to compare the quality of education in Russia with the Caucasus. Another Russian interviewee mentioned how the differences in education were not significant, however, his answer signified a form of hierarchy, perceiving the Caucasus and Central Asia as "backward": "It is all the same. Perhaps the national minorities from the Caucasus or Central Asia receive better treatment because of their cultural backwardness, but that does not amount to much."[129] To believe that the people of the Caucasus received special treatment for their supposed backwardness shows that there was this perception that the Caucasus needed to be educated by Russians. This is an example of the Russian saviour complex, where the Caucasus people are seen as lesser than because they do not fit the homo sovieticus standard throughout their education. These misconceptions by Slavic people surrounding the favouritism of education in the Caucasus led to harmful conclusions, perceiving the people as culturally backward in comparison to the rest of the Soviet Union.

These perceptions of Georgians by Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians were influenced by their association with Stalin, which eventually involved the perception of Georgians in general. A Georgian interviewee spoke of this difficulty: "The boy and his sister, she believed deeply in Stalin, wrote a letter to Stalin asking that their father be freed. But he was shot. And when Vlenin learned of this he clenched his little fist …

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[127] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 4, Case 46 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Male, 33, Byelorussian, Normirovchik in machine building. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.38.

[128] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 58 (interviewer F.W. and J.B., type A2. Male, 35 (estimate), Great Russian (Cossack), Tractorist/Stevedore. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.25-26.

[129] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 37, Case 324/(NY)1738 (interviewer A.S., type A4). Male, 31, Great Russian, Bookkeeper in MTS. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.20.

and swore that he would never forget this and that he would avenge his father."[130] This is in complete contrast with what a Russian interviewee said: "Of course there are differences. … Russians are in the greatest need. If a Georgian writes to Stalin everything he asks will be granted."[131] Because of the association between Georgia and Stalin, Slavic peoples believed that his Georgian origin would result in an easier life for the Georgians (and potentially for the Caucasus as a whole). However, this was not the reality as pointed out by an Armenian interviewee: "Although Stalin himself is a Georgian, the Georgian suffer just as much as any other nationality."[132] In the perspective of a Georgian herself, although not outright specified, her view on the regime and thus Stalin signifies how the connection between Georgia and Stalin were not as significant as non-Caucasus people claimed: "Then there was his funeral. All the big shots of the Party were there and also La Passionara who delivered a speech at his funeral. Her speech ended with the words, "Long live Stalin". This made a terrible impression on me."[133] The perceptions that Russians had of Georgians as having an advantage was harmful as it polarised the two groups and ignored the suffering caused by Stalin in the country.

The perception that Stalin favoured the Georgians over other Soviet citizens also included the Caucasus region and its people because of their perceived autonomy in agricultural productivity compared to the urban areas of the USSR. A Ukrainian interviewee explained how the connection between Stalin and minorities was mutual: "Stalin likes the Jews. Georgians, and Armenians better than the Russians. … Different people, Jews, Georgians, people from the Caukasus [sic], Mongols, Tatars those whom Stalin likes. … Because they support Stalin. They do not like the Russians and Ukrainians. They like only their own people and Stalin."[134] From his wording a divide between the Slavic and Caucasus/Central Asian people can be seen, next to a

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[130] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 472 (interviewer S.H., type A4). Female, 34, Georgian, NKVD agent, jurist, journalist. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.12-13.

[131] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 58 (interviewer F.W. and J.B., type A2. Male, 35 (estimate), Great Russian (Cossack), Tractorist/Stevedore. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.25.

[132] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 33, Case 266/(NY)1313 (interviewer T.E., type A4). Female, 49, Armenian, Bookkeeper. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.39.

[133] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 472 (interviewer S.H., type A4). Female, 34, Georgian, NKVD agent, jurist, journalist. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.31.

[134] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 28, Case 537 (interviewer J.O., type A4). Male, 26, Ukrainian, Chauffeur. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.29.

sense of hostility. This divide was further supported with their argument regarding agricultural freedom in comparison to Eastern Europe: "It is not a secret that in the Caucasus and Central Asia people live better, and are permitted to have more cows. They are freer than the Ukrainians and Belorussians."[135] The perception that people in the Caucasus and Central Asia lived better was thus based on what they were permitted to own in comparison to what Eastern Europeans were allowed. "The collectivization came first in Ukraine and Belorussian [sic], and was much later and easier and more gradual in those other places, In 1932-33 when I was in the Urals, there were Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians in exile, but no Chechens or Ingush or those peoples. Collectivization was much more gradual in those places."[136] In this case, the Ural camps were a response to quickly collectivise the urban areas, mainly the Volga and North Caucasus area.[137] Although the Chechens or Ingush live in the North Caucasus region, the focus of collectivisation in the urban areas of the Soviet Union first led to the recruitment of mostly non-Caucasus people who lived in the Volga region. The misconception regarding the lack of Caucasus people in these exile camps served to further the divide among Soviet citizens, causing possible harmful situations for the lives of Caucasus peoples.

Soviet propaganda in education

Propaganda in education continued to fuel these misconceptions regarding the Caucasus in a way that stimulated the saviour mentality of the Russians. The propaganda in education from the perspective of a Russian dominated state rewrote history in such a way that the regime was doing good things for peoples outside of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic]. This can especially be seen in the experience of a Russian school director: "A member of the obcom [Organisation of the Communist Party] who had come to see me tried to teach me methodology. … he tells me that I am not teaching history the right way. … Saying that it was not political enough."[138] From his experience it can be seen how political parties had the

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[135] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 4, Case 46 (interviewer J.B., type A4). Male, 33, Byelorussian, Normirovchik in machine building. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.38.
[136] Ibid., p.38.
[137] James Harris "The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929-31." *The Russian Review* 56, no. 2 (1997). pp.267-268.
[138] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 61 (interviewer K.G./J.R., type A3). Male, 40, Great Russian, School director. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.12.

power to pressure teachers to change the historical narrative in favour of the communists. "Take for instance the history of the Caucasus. You had to explain, or you had to tell the students that the Soviet regime did great things for the Caucasus and that these things could never have been done by any other regime. In short, history had to be taught in terms of praising the Soviet regime."[139] His wording shows that he was aware of the lies regarding the things that the Soviet regime did to the Caucasus, yet he had to adopt the narrative in favour of the communists. Similarly, another Russian teacher who taught in the Caucasus explained that history education only started in 1934.[140] When asked why it was not a part of the curriculum before, she explained: "Because the old history was considered to be lies. The new history was entirely new, and consisted only of the battles of the revolution."[141] The fact that this Russian teacher is mentioning this means that she was aware of the state propaganda and potentially critiqued this rewriting of Caucasus history to fit the Soviet narrative. The narrative that the Caucasus was "helped" by the regime insinuated that the Caucasus needed saving and that by being a part of the Soviet Union the Russian communists were doing them a favour. This saviour mentality that was being perpetuated in history education also served as a precursor for the saviour narrative within contemporary Soviet historiography.

Soviet propaganda in education worsened the relations between the people of the Caucasus and Russians due to the suppression of their Caucasus national identity. Within education, having *komvospitanie* [a communist upbringing] meant the removal of religious and cultural ties to someone's nationality. Similarly as in the case for atheist education, the homo sovieticus concept shows that a communist upbringing looked different for Russians than for the people of the Caucasus. Sovietisation and becoming the ideal Soviet citizen were a de facto russification process for non-Russian peoples.[142] Expressing nationalism or pride was seen as an act of violence against the state, as it went against the uniformity of communism. A Russian interviewee classified it as chauvinism: "Then in the nationalities on the borders of the Soviet Union you have a certain desire for independence and sometimes this approaches

[139] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 61 (interviewer K.G./J.R., type A3). Male, 40, Great Russian, School director. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.12.
[140] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 25, Case 493 (interviewer R.S., type A4). Female, 55, Great Russian, Teacher. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.14.
[141] Ibid., p.14.
[142] Hagendoorn et al. 'Inter-Ethnic Preferences and Ethnic Hierarchies in the Former Soviet Union'. p.485.

chauvinism. This is the case in the Caucasus and in Central Asia, but this has changed somewhat in that they are being educated to get rid of national animosities but this chauvinism remains nevertheless."[143] The Caucasus and Central Asia are mentioned specifically for their nationalism unlike Western Soviet states such as Ukraine or Belarus. A possible reason for this can be the contrast between Caucasus/Central Asian culture with the Russian/Slavic culture. A Cherkessian interviewee explained: "We of our own nationality helped ourselves more than the Russians. We helped each other though the Russians too helped themselves out. This is caused by the fact, that our nationality was more backward and less developed."[144] Here the difference between Caucasus peoples and Russians is because of what he labelled his own culture as "backward" in contrast to the Slavic "advanced" culture, which is a form of internalised discrimination. Rather than bridging these differences, adapting to Slavic culture became mandatory for the people of the Caucasus and Central Asia, leaving them discriminated against as a result. As a Chechen interviewee explained: "You are supposed to stand at attention (smirno) and welcome the Russians. Russian officers like to treat you with scorn and teach you how to salute them and they like to do it in public."[145] A self-perpetuating cycle was formed where minority groups expressed nationalism as resistance to this communist upbringing, and the state reinforced propaganda in education as a response to people's nationalism.

The limitations to gaining quality education in the Caucasus

Inequality within the education system manifested itself in ways that led to making quality education less accessible for the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. A Russian interviewee explained: "It is not true that everyone has the same opportunity for education in the higher levels. The fees were enormous and many could not go on."[146] In her answer the fees were what held people back in pursuing quality education. This can also be seen in the case of a Cherkessian interviewee: "I only

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[143] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 28, Case 532 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 50, Great Russian, Planner-economist and major in Soviet Army. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.83.
[144] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 18, Case 344 (interviewer M.L., type A4). Male, 26, Cherkessian. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.9.
[145] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.39.
[146] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 31, Case 306/(NY)1106 (interviewer M.S., type A4). Female, 56, Great Russian (Cossack), Librarian - Head of Department. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.27.

finished six classes, before the seventh class came about I didn't have the material means. … I couldn't afford text-books and I couldn't afford clothing or note-books and this had a bad affect upon my education."[147] In the Caucasus there was no safety net to make sure children did not miss their education, as the Cherkessian interviewee added: "When I finished only six classes [out of the mandatory seven], they called me and my mother and asked us why I didn't continue school. My mother explained to them that I didn't have clothing, that we didn't have anything. Finally they told us to go home after many such visits and they closed the case."[148] This situation showed that for the students that did not have the financial means there was no compensation to ensure everyone received equal amount of the mandatory education. In Central Asia a more extreme case was seen through the experience of a Tajiki interviewee, who had to give up his education: "The respondent completed no more than three years of schooling because he had to begin looking for work. … Undoubtedly under favorable circumstances the respondent would have continued his schooling at least till the end of seven years if it had been possible. But there was no strong drive in the respondent and no strong drive on the part of the family for education at the cost of everything."[149] A significant detail here is that education seemingly would have cost the interviewee and his family everything, meaning that in certain regions of the USSR education was for the more fortunate.[150] education was less accessible for some people in the Soviet Union. Education was thus inaccessible for many families in the Caucasus and Central Asia regions because of the high costs that were not compensated, which led to unequal opportunities for minorities.

The unequal opportunities to follow quality education also related to living in the rural areas of the Soviet Union. A Russian interviewee spoke of a story of a Belorussian she knew who wanted to get a higher education, but because he lived in a small village he was limited to only four years of schooling.[151] In a similar case, a Cossack interviewee explained: "When I was a kid I wanted to get more education, but in the country it was not possible. … Where I lived the kide [sic] could only get 5

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[147] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 18, Case 344 (interviewer M.L., type A4). Male, 26, Cherkessian. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.22-23.
[148] Ibid., p.22.
[149] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 16, Case 318 (interviewer S.H., type A4). Male, 31, Tadzhik, in Army, but not a professional soldier. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.16.
[150] Theodore Gerber. 2000. "Educational Stratification in Contemporary Russia: Stability and Change in the Face of Economic and Institutional Crisis." *Sociology of Education* 73 (4): p.222.
[151] Ibid., p.27.

years of education, and if they wanted to study more they had to be sent away; that costs money."[152] In his answer, "in the country" could signify either the country side or the country he resided in (respondent mentioned he moved to Baku with his family, but never where he lived previously). Both the costs of education and commuting were not financed by the state, leaving families in the country side with less options for schooling. From all interviewees' stories it showed that people's locations and financial situations had a significant impact on the education available to them and those living in urban areas had more opportunities in comparison.

During the tsarist era the people in the Caucasus had autonomy over their agricultural property, which was valued by the local population as it was an agricultural region. Agricultural freedom was a prioritiy for the people of the Caucasus, which led to the preference for the Tsarist regime. This is especially seen in an answer given by a Cherkessian interviewee: "We of our own nationality helped ourselves more than the Russians. We helped each other though the Russians too helped themselves out. This is caused by the fact, that our nationality was more backward and less developed. Our people were very industrious and they liked very much the idea of private property. Under the Tsars they had their own land and they worked better."[153] Interestingly, the Cherkessian interviewee classified his own people as backward, which leaves the question if the Soviet perspective influenced this way of thinking. The dissatisfaction for the Soviet regime was also seen in the Chechen interviewee who simply stated: "Bolshevism is worse than Tzarism."[154] When it came to education, a Cossack interviewee responded: "I think there were more difficulties under the Soviet power. … *(How about under the Tsars?)* Then people did have money to educate the children. … If I had not been a white Guard or kulak, and in spite of the little education I had received I could have advanced."[155] Here the interviewee highlights how social background was not limiting one's educational opportunities, something which was the case under Soviet rule. Although the loyalty to the Tsar is evident in his answer, the importance of social background in USSR education remains. Whereas Russians

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[152] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 54 (interviewer M.F., type A3). Male, 57, Cossack, Peasant. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.18.

[153] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 18, Case 344 (interviewer M.L., type A4). Male, 26, Cherkessian. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.9.

[154] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.39.

[155] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 54 (interviewer M.F., type A3). Male, 57, Cossack, Peasant. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.18.

believed that Stalin favoured the Caucasus and treated them better, assuming this would satisfy the Caucasus with the Soviet regime, in most cases, the opposite was true. The Caucasus people expressed greater satisfaction with the Tsarist era for its agricultural freedom and the belief that social background did not hinder educational opportunities.

The effects of forced political affiliation on educational opportunities

The Soviet education system made political affiliation to the Party mandatory which significantly affected people's accessibility to quality education. The Komsomol was the Communist Union of Youth in the Soviet Union, a political organisation where people aged 14 to 28 were prepared to participate in the Communist party. The way that the education system was set up in the republics of the Soviet Union, it served the youth great benefits to join the organisation. As one Russian interviewee explained: "The government took advantage of the desire for higher education. … The only way to get out of this circle is to join the Komsomol, to be politically active, to be a Party member, and so on. Every applicant for a higher education is subjected to a rigorous examination concerning his background."[156] There was a desire for higher education among the youth to escape generational cycles, as she explained that children had to follow the career paths of their parents.[157] The state made use of this by spreading communist propaganda with the use of the Komsomol, recruiting youth as members in exchange for educational opportunities. "Being in the Party or the Komsomol doesn't actually help avoid danger but it does give certain advantages. It is easier to get into schools if one is a Komsomol member."[158] Unfair treatment within the education system towards non-members was further explained: "The "activists" were the ones who usually got the scholarships."[159] As family bonds and social backgrounds were heavily focused on, children whose parents were politically targeted by the state did not have the same educational opportunities as their peers.

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[156] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 31, Case 306/(NY)1106 (interviewer M.S., type A4). Female, 56, Great Russian (Cossack), Librarian - Head of Department. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.27.

[157] Ibid., p.27.

[158] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 33, Case 266/(NY)1313 (interviewer T.E., type A4). Female, 49, Armenian, Bookkeeper. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.37.

[159] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 31, Case 306/(NY)1106 (interviewer M.S., type A4). Female, 56, Great Russian (Cossack), Librarian - Head of Department. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.27.

This was due to the inability to join the Komsomol if the child's family was deemed suspicious or the enemy of the state. This then affected educational opportunities, as further explained: "The child of someone who had been deprived of the right to vote stood absolutely no chance of getting a higher education."[160] This furthered the divide between those rejected and labelled by the state as enemies, and those receiving educational opportunities. An Avaret interviewee added: "If it is 1940 and he has just finished a higher educational institution, then he must be a Komsomol. … I never heard of any case in which the son of a politically unreliable element ever finished such an institute."[161] This divide among the Soviet youth leaves the possibility for resentment towards the state and each other open. The education system left no opportunities for those who were not willing to take part in political activities or those who had to face generational cycles of being ostracised by the state.

Social background influenced Caucasus minorities' positions within education and further determined the lives of the future generation. The Komsomol was a way to convince people of communist ideology, as children followed their parent's footsteps and educational benefits allowed for broader career choices. A reason to join the Komsomol is to "cleanse" their social background and start anew for future generations to come, as the Avaret interviewee explained: "A person tries to get into the Komsomol not because he honestly believes in its program, but only because his social origin is wrong and he wants to be able to work honestly; if he wants to work honestly with such a social background, he must be a Komsomol or a Party member.[162] In the case of the interviewee, his reasoning to join was to use the Komsomol to better his educational career: "*(Therefore you tried to get into the Komsomol?)* Yes. I did not think that they would still hold my father in contempt (prezirat'), and by joining the Komsomol I would be able to improve my position and go back to school to study further. I knew that I could not get into school without being a member of the Komsomol. Those who wanted to join the Komsomol faced the same difficulties to join as in quality education, as the interviewee continued: *(Could you tell me what happened when you tried to join?)* I want [sic] to a meeting, and they told me to give my audo-biography [sic]. ... Then one

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[160] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 31, Case 306/(NY)1106 (interviewer M.S., type A4). Female, 56, Great Russian (Cossack), Librarian - Head of Department. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.27.

[161] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.17.

[162] Ibid., pp.27-28.

Komsomol got up and said that I was the son of a kulak who had been exiled and whose property has been confiscated, and that I could not, therefore, be an honest Soviet worker."[163] Many kulaks (a peasant who had property) lived in the North Caucasus, which meant that the Soviet system singled out many Caucasus people for their agricultural activities during the Tsar era.[164] The perpetuated inequality in education based on social background and political alignment not only alienated a group from society, but also punished them by limiting career opportunities.

The education system perpetuated inequality among minority groups because of the political involvement that was expected of the Soviet youth, further influencing their career paths. Political involvement among those who did not feel aligned with the ideology were immediately restricted in their career choices, as seen in the case of the Cherkessian interviewee: "I wanted to become a teacher at first. I was too young to realise that the teacher carries on propaganda among the population and pupils."[165] Advanced positions that required higher education were limited to those who were politically active, which limited the Cherkessian interviewee as he likely did not align with this political ideology: "… but when I realised I couldn't study to be a teacher I turned to mechanics."[166] In the case of a Tatar interviewee, his father and uncle got arrested which affected his education: "I could not enter the komsomol. … because I was the son of a kulak. … [it] did not concern me except for the education."[167] His answer showed how heavily the Soviet education prioritised politically active students as he only wanted to be a part of the Komsomol for the education benefits. Minority groups who were limited to less advanced career options because of their lack of political involved furthered their resentment for the Soviet regime or those who excelled and be the reason to leave, which can be seen in the Averet interviewee's comment: "There is no equality among workers in the Soviet Union, and I can say that there never will be. … if a man is a Komsomol or a Party member, he can take care of

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[163] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.27-28.
[164] Lewin. 1985. *The Making of the Soviet System*. p.129.
[165] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 18, Case 344 (interviewer M.L., type A4). Male, 26, Cherkessian. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.23.
[166] Ibid., p.23.
[167] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 16, Case 319 (interviewer M.F., type A4). Male, 25, Tatar. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.8.

himself better and he is better off. Yet, there they are always shouting that they have equality of all."[168]

Caucasus minorities prioritised having unity among the other nationalities despite tension that was present amongst each other. The pressure from the regime through censorship and the marginalisation of Caucasus people in education did not halter the connection that the nationalities had with each other. The Avaret interviewee explained how the censorship of the regime should be used for the benefit of unity: "The government must have a censorship so that it will not allow any anti-national criticism or harmful criticism of any branch of the government. The government must not be allowed to split its people into several parts. It should permit the censorship to be carried on in the language of each nationality."[169] He mentioned the Caucasus question more explicitly as an example for unity: "Well, for example, in the Caucasus, there are 37 different nationalities, … . If some of these nationalities start to carry on propaganda directed against some of the others, this would be harmful."[170] The propaganda directed against some of the other as mentioned by the interviewee could very possibly be related to the tensions between Armenia and Caucasus Turks, specifically Azerbaijanis. In a case where both republics were allowed free speech, it was likely that propaganda against each other like the Avaret interviewee said would have taken place, as Nagorno-Karabakh was (and still is) a controversial topic. Unity among other nationalities as described by Azerbaijani: "… that [free education among all nations] is the only thing I liked there. … also the race question. That should be the same, that there is no difference between races."[171] His answer shows the consideration of having harmony among different races, despite the border tensions with Armenia in the 1940s. The Azerbaijani and Avaret interviewees showed how solidarity among other Caucasus nationalities continued despite the continuous pressuring influence from the regime in Moscow.

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[168] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 16, Case 319 (interviewer M.F., type A4). Male, 25, Tatar. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.42.
[169] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.74-75.
[170] Ibid., pp.74-75.
[171] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 3, Case 24 (interviewer K.G., type A3). Male, 37, Azerbaidjan, Doctor. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.45.

Conclusion

The Soviet education system perpetuated inequalities and affected the opportunities of the people in the Caucasus. The propaganda prevalent in the education system led to the harmful misunderstandings between Russians and the Caucasus people, which created a divide between the nationalities. Stalin's legacy in particular left a bad impression of the Caucasus region for the Russians, leading to the belief that the Caucasus people were favoured over other nationalities or went ahead in their education. In reality, the experiences of the Caucasus people were horrible, as they had their Caucasus identity stripped away from them next to their possessions. The Caucasus spirit and identity, which existed of agricultural activity and home hospitality, were taken from them through the removal of people's land, houses, rooms and animals. At the same time, the Soviet education system rewrote the history of the Caucasus to fit the Soviet saviour narrative, which was another loss for the Caucasus identity. The education that the Caucasus people followed was limited in several ways. Factors such as money, travel time, political activity and social background greatly affected the opportunities of students in the Caucasus, which led some to not finish their education.

The social background of the people from the Caucasus during the Tsarist era consisted of agricultural activity, which was later labelled by the Soviet state as being a "kulak". As a social label, these peasants were purged by the state, which affected the future of their children in education. The social background of children's parents led to them not being able to join the Komsomol, a political youth movement that automatically gave educational opportunities for the members. Those who were not members were excluded and shunned in society, affecting their (educational) career. However, inequality also resulted in unity among the other Caucasus nationalities. The strict propaganda regulation within education offered for the Caucasus nationalities to not release their own propaganda amongst each other, albeit with pressure.

Chapter 3 Living conditions and Caucasus identity

Introduction

Forced Sovietisation damaged the Caucasus identity as the overall living conditions of the Caucasus people worsened as a result. Redistribution of land and property, which was meant to create equality among all Soviet citizens, took away parts of the Caucasus identity as agricultural freedom played a prominent role in this identity. The reality of these policies showed a difference between the experiences of the Caucasus people and the intended result for the Soviet citizen. The censorship of news and the mandatory usage of the Russian language for Caucasus citizens influenced the lives of the Caucasus people by limiting their access to career opportunities or information related to their Caucasus identity.

Throughout this chapter the experiences of the Caucasus people affected by Soviet governance will be used to see how their everyday lives were affected and how it affected the Caucasus identity. Intersecting factors such as redistributive policies and cultural suppression showed the strengthening of inter-Caucasus bonds and hinted towards organised resistance towards the state. Using the homo sovieticus concept as a central theme and comparison, it showed how this concept served as a replacement for the Caucasus identity. The effects of Sovietisation, which was actually a de-facto Russification process, is highlighted within the Caucasus region as it shows the overall struggle for Caucasus citizens to assimilate, bond together and resist Soviet governance.

The limitations of the Caucasus identity on the overall living conditions

The living conditions of the Caucasus worsened as a consequence of redistributing belongings to the state, which gained most benefits. The belongings that were confiscated by the regime such as land, animals, property, various items and money were taken by the communist state to be "redistributed" among the people and promote equality. However, in reality, this drastically changed people's lives in comparison to how they lived during pre-Soviet times. A Chechen interviewee explained: "I never had a decent suit in the Soviet Union. Prior to the Soviet regime. I

had good clean clothes. But not during the Soviet regime."[172] The interviewee not having decent clothes was only an example of what else was missing in the lives of Soviet citizens. He continued: "I did not live. I just existed. And so did my family. There were inadequacies every day. I never went once to the movies there (USSR) since there was no money."[173] His experience showed that for many people they did not have the means to enjoy secondary necessities nor have basic necessities such as clothing. The worsening of these living conditions took away the people's freedom to dress however they wanted or take part in the activities that they wanted to do, reducing them to a shell of what they were during Tsar times. To contrast his experience with those in power or who were in a better position in society, he said: "People in the Raiispolkom, in the Raikom, in the Obkom, and in the NKVD and in the army dressed well."[174] He mentioned that in the USSR, being politically active was the only good career choice a person could make: "All he can do there is become a member of the Pioneers and the Komsomol and the Communist Party."[175] As it was difficult for the Caucasus people to rise in the Komsomol due to their social background, their opportunities were not the same as Russians. People in power, despite the intention of promoting equality among Soviet citizens, experienced better living conditions.

Communist rule not only stripped away the belongings of the people from the Caucasus, it also stripped away a part of Caucasus culture. The Chechen interviewee explained how the Soviet regime took away a part of Caucasus hospitality culture: "We had two rooms. One was a guest room because in the Caucasus you have guests every day, and we lived in the other room – my wife, two children and I. In 1930 we lost one of the rooms because there was supposed to be only one room per family."[176] The detail he mentioned how it is normal to have guests over inside the house among Caucasus people showed how the communist regime limited this part of their identity as part of confiscating property. As part of collectivisation, the lives of the people in the Caucasus were difficult as further described: "… our conditions of life depended on the Russian people. The Caucasus were very hard up under the Soviet regime.

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[172] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.25-26.
[173] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.25-26.
[174] Ibid., pp.25-26.
[175] Ibid., pp.25-26.
[176] Ibid., p.26.

The Russian people are to blame. Prior to the Soviet Union when you had the Tsars any peasant could have land and could acquire wealth."[177] Caucasus peasants, who previously thrived on agricultural freedom in the region, were dependent on the Soviet regime to make a living, which limited their freedom as a Caucasus person. The items and land that were taken from the Caucasus people not only made them lose their livelihood, but also parts of their identity through hospitality and independent agriculture.

The state limited people's careers through extensive bureaucracy, affecting people from the Caucasus who wanted to move to cities for better opportunities. The bureaucracy that was enforced upon Soviet citizens especially hit those living in rural areas of the Soviet Union, as they were not allowed to move towns unless permitted. One Armenian interviewee explained what a person went through if they wished to move: "He must get a doctor's certificate for his wife and then go to the town to which he wants to move and get himself a room and a job. There are no apartments for rent, … . What he does is find someone who wants to go to Cheliabinsk and then come to an agreement with this person [to trade]."[178] This system did not allow for the freedom to move oneself, limiting housing options as there are no vacant spaces. This process already left out those who lived in smaller towns, as moving was seen as an exchange. Moving to a bigger city was beneficial for one party, but not for the person exchanging their house to live in the rural areas. The interviewee added: "There are no rooms ever that are vacant and can be rented just like that. The only way to get a room is to rent it. In such towns as Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad, there are no rooms to be had at all. And no one in these towns would be willing to trade rooms with someone in a town like Cheliabinsk."[179] What this tells us is that, in the case for Caucasus people, moving to a city in the centre such as Moscow was very rare, which meant that their career opportunities were limited to their country of origin. Big cities like the mentioned Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev were places that represented top career opportunities and development. This favoured those who already lived in the big cities, such as in Moscow, Leningrad or Kiev, as they had more job or educational opportunities in urban

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[177] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.26.
[178] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 33, Case 266/(NY)1313 (interviewer T.E., type A4). Female, 49, Armenian, Bookkeeper. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.23.
[179] Ibid., pp.23-24.

areas compared to the country side. Thus, the Caucasus people had difficulties moving to these urban areas, which possibly limited job opportunities.

Those who had powerful political connections in the Caucasus were able to avoid the bureaucracy of moving whereas the average Caucasus person was separated from the urban centres. The process to get permission from the state to move to a different location for career or educational opportunities was heavily influenced by who that person is or knows: "If the person is intelligent and has many influential acquaintances, he can accomplish what he wants to do."[180] In this situation, someone who was intelligent and had influential acquaintances meant to be politically active, do well in their education and have a spotless social background. This singled out many citizens from the Caucasus for different reasons, such as language barriers in education, religious beliefs, political beliefs and their background in peasantry (being classified a kulak). The Armenian interviewee noticed this pattern: "It is impossible to live or work in any town without permission. And getting this permission depends on having a room at one's disposal. It is all a great vicious circle."[181] Thus, it was rare to have good connections with people who were influential enough politically to avoid bureaucratic hurdles as an ordinary Caucasus citizen. "If you find a good person who can and will help you, then it can be done. But by normal legal processes, it would be very difficult."[182]

Censorship from the State and how this connected the Caucasus

The news that the people in the Caucasus received from the state was heavily censored, which made them want to consume news from outside the USSR. The Avaret interviewee explained the situation: "If it were discovered that people were listening to foreign stations, the NKVD would promptly come and take them away."[183] The heavy guardship regarding the information that Soviet citizens received was especially seen when the people he listened to the radio with got arrested: "(Did you ever try to listen to foreign stations?) Yes. I listened to Turkey in 1932, in the house of an engineer. … Three or four days after we had been at his house, we did not see him

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[180] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 33, Case 266/(NY)1313 (interviewer T.E., type A4). Female, 49, Armenian, Bookkeeper. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.23.
[181] Ibid., p.23
[182] Ibid., p.23
[183] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.57.

any more; he had been arrested."[184] He also mentioned how the broadcasts from the state worked, and what he would listen to: "It was like a telephone – they sent you certain broadcasts from a central point and you could only listen to the program they were sending. I liked to listen to Caucasian music and songs, and at midnight I listened to the latest news from Moscow."[185] The wish to remain in touch with his Caucasus identity through music in times of heavy censorship showed the resistance to the Soviet state and is a precursor for how they remained in contact with outside connections.

Caucasus people helped each other in acquiring news from outside of the Soviet Union, as they needed information that the communist state refused to give them. In the case of the Avaret interviewee, Caucasus people wished to receive news from outside of the Soviet Union because they could not practise their religious fast without the proper information from the atheist state. International communication was still made possible through connections: "…by getting news from Arabia. (How did you do this?) People would come from Arabia or Turkey and come through the mountains which are on the border between Turkey and the Caucasus."[186] The solidarity among the Caucasus people to resist the censorship from the state can be seen in his determination to spread the information he received from outside the union: "I have heard that this same form of communication still continues, in spite of the international boundaries. In 1939, they told me in a letter what was the exact date of this holiday, and I spread the word among the others among the sovkhoz."[187] Despite how dangerous it was, it was common in the Caucasus to share outsider information amongst each other in order to acquire the information more relevant to their Caucasus identity. This solidarity amongst the Caucasus people was both the cause and effect of the homo sovieticus standard. While the Caucasus people were forced to adjust to this standard by not consuming outsider information helpful for their religious practises, this in turn strengthened the Caucasus bonds and further divided the Caucasus identity from the "standard" Soviet identity that they rejected.

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[184] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.57.
[185] Ibid., p.57.
[186] Ibid., p.48.
[187] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.48

Caucasus people were rewarded with better positions in society if they betrayed others of their own ethnicity. Communist propaganda that the state perpetuated gave advantages to those who were loyal to the socialist ideology and had a "clear" social background. The characteristics of an "ideal" Soviet citizen in the Caucasus who could climb the social ladder was described as follows: "(What sort of persons from among the local nationalities get into the local directing posts?) Those whose social origin is from the poor families, from the farm laborers, those who have entered the Party a long time ago, have found asylum in it, so to speak, those who can praise the Soviet regime very well, … , those who are in margin of the Communists."[188] The favouritism from the regime was harmful for the Caucasus population as it created a division between those who wanted to get ahead in society and those who were doing things that related to their Caucasus identity. For example, in the case of the Avaret interviewee, a fellow Caucasus person could be rewarded for exposing him if he was found gathering outsider information to be able to practise his religion. He summarised: "… those who know how to do a great deal that is bad for the people… . If a person denounces some of his friends or exposes people in his village who are trying to hide something in their biography which would not have been good for them if discovered, they are immediately appointed to high posts. In other words, those who know how to drown other people, get ahead."[189] The Soviet regime established this fear among Caucasus people to keep socialist ideology present everywhere, but it also resulted in the erasure of Caucasus solidarity. Thus, Caucasus identity and solidarity could not coexist with having a high position in Soviet society. As a result the Caucasus people were divided and tensions amongst the general population arose. This could have been a benefit to the Soviet government considering the ongoing solidarity amongst the Caucasus people that helped them go against the regime through their Caucasus-ness.

The Russian language was an obstacle for the daily lives of the people in the Caucasus, as their own language was dismissed and feared for nationalism. Official printed material was printed in Russian, which left no space for the ethnic languages spoken by minorities: "The calendars were printed only in Russian. In the Soviet Union, you cannot print anything without submitting it to the censorship, and we were not

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[188] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.88.
[189] Ibid., p.88.

allowed to print out own calendars. We would have had to pay a great deal – not in money, but in people."[190] In this situation, the calendar being in Russian hindered the calculation of dates for the religious fast. However, the Caucasus identity, apart from a religious standpoint, was undermined by not allowing minorities to have their native language on printed material. Caucasus people were marginalised in Soviet society compared to Russians as part of their identity through language was undermined. In other cases this marginalisation was done to combat nationalism of the non-Russian ethnicities, which can be seen in the Belorussian example: "Most of the books were in Russian but some were in Bielo-russian as well. .. They said that the Russian language was the language of the revolution, the language of the Great Russian revolution. Soviets feared Bielo Russian nationalism. There were many cases of people arrested for nationalism."[191] Although this was not said by someone from the Caucasus, a similar conclusion can be drawn that the areas outside of Russia were punished for expressing nationalism that could have stemmed from speaking a language other than Russian.

People in the Caucasus were forced to learn Russian through education, whereas Russians were punished less for not learning the local languages. The Russian teacher who taught in Armenia explained: "It was during this period that Mikaian [sic] came to our region, and spoke at a large mass teachers' meeting. He spoke in Armenian, laying before the teachers and students the necessity of learning the Russian language, the language of Russia."[192] Mikoyan, a known Armenian Bolshevik, promoted learning the Russian language in an Armenian school. This was likely a strategy used to spread the Russian language more convincingly. The interviewee continued: "This was not an easy thing to convince the students of, most of the natseni had no love for Russian."[193] "Natseni" in this sentence refers to the locals living in Armenia, as the word is likely derived from the Russian root word "natsiya" (nation, people). The teacher felt as though this dislike for Russian was seen as anti-Russian: "(Did you feel this anti-Russian feeling yourself?) Yes, many times the

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[190] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.48.
[191] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 11, Case 142 (interviewer M.L., type A4). Male, 27, Byelorussian, Elementary school teacher. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.9.
[192] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 25, Case 493 (interviewer R.S., type A4). Female, 55, Great Russian, Teacher. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.16.
[193] Ibid., p.16.

students would not listen to me."[194] Caucasus students, for whichever reason, disliked learning Russian during times of Russification. As a contrast, Russians who moved to the Caucasus for work also had to learn the local language, although in her case, not learning Armenian did not hinder her: "Russians had to learn Armenian if they were living in this region. I could not learn it.[195] The importance of the Russian language was propagated by important Soviet figures, despite being from the Caucasus themselves.

Russians took on better positions at the expense of Caucasus people because of the preference for Russian speakers. The inequality in Soviet society was explained by the Avaret interviewee: "There is no part of the Soviet Union in which the raiistokom, the directors of the plants, the heads of the NKVD are not Russian. The Germans did the same thing, putting their own people in the directing posts."[196] The fact that Russians were more likely in positions of power was further confirmed by the Chechen interviewee: "In the Caucasus conditions were worse than they were in Tula or in Moscow because the Russian worker had it a bit easier than our Caucasian people because whether or not a Chechen got a job or received something depended upon the Russians."[197] This inequality was linked to the Russian language, which could be noticed in the order of how messages were translated in: "All orders are given in the Russian language, not in the local languages. After the orders come they translate them into the local language. Up until 1929, the raions received their orders in the local languages, but after the de-kulakization and collectivization, everything was done in Russian."[198] Similarly, an Azerbaijani interviewee argued that the Russians exploited the Caucasus minority for the language barrier: "We suddenly noticed that the Russians were being given the better posts and were being sent to the country. (Why is this done?) That is clear. They have such national minority in their hands to exploit them. They don't admit them to the upper posts."[199] Russians withheld Caucasus people from important roles for not speaking Russian as their native language,

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[194] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 25, Case 493 (interviewer R.S., type A4). Female, 55, Great Russian, Teacher. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.16.
[195] Ibid., p.16.
[196] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.87
[197] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.13.
[198] Ibid., pp.87-88.
[199] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 3, Case 24 (interviewer K.G., type A3). Male, 37, Azerbaidjan, Doctor. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.6-7.

however, they spread Russian as a second language to the region as part of their socialist ideology: "Any one who wants to have an important post must conduct his business in Russian language. This is the language of October, the so-called "Liberation Language" (osvoboditelni language.)"[200] Russian being named the "Liberation Language" by the Bolsheviks and seen in quotations by the Azerbaijani showed that the Caucasus minorities did not agree, as it was in fact restricting their positions in society.

Russification of the Caucasus and how it affected Caucasus bonds

Russian nationalism was punished less by the state than Caucasus nationalism as they were the marginalsied minority. The Ukrainian interviewee explained: "As the Russians are a ruling, dominant nation, they are never persecuted or punished for their great Russian nationalism and chauvinism."[201] While the Ukrainians were not as marginalised as the other minorities in the Caucasus or Central Asia, a comparison of nationalism between Russia and "the other" can still be made from the Ukrainian perspective. "On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of court trials publicized in the Soviet press … are concerned with punishment of local national patriotism and nationalism among other nations living in the USSR. Those trials took place in almost every Soviet Republic, except the RSFSR, mostly in the Ukraine and Georgia. The Ukrainian interviewee continued to explain the link between the pressure of Sovietisation and rising nationalism: "The most persecuted are those peoples who make the strongest resistance against the Russification policy of the Soviet government … those who preserve their national culture and national characteristics, such as the Ukrainians, White Russians, Georgians, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Tartars, etc." There was a difference between Russian nationalism and nationalism expressed by the national minorities, which led to the acceptance of nationalism for the majority, and punishment for the marginalised minority in the Caucasus.

The Caucasus identity was not in line with the homo sovieticus, which led to the punishment of Caucasus nationalism and ultimately the Caucasus identity. "Education of the Soviet standardized man proceeds on the basis of the Russian language,

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[200] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 3, Case 24 (interviewer K.G., type A3). Male, 37, Azerbaidjan, Doctor. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.6-7.
[201] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 35, Case 118/(NY)1517 (interviewer W.T., type A4). Male, 40, Ukrainian, Secondary school teacher. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.26-27.

Russian culture, Russian state achievements and traditions."[202] The creation of the Soviet identity was based on the existing Russian identity, which was further spread across the republics throughout education. There was no space for the "other", as stated by the interviewee: "From the other national republics are added only some elements which are convenient for this purpose. It is a process of Russification."[203] This statement coincides with the idea that Sovietisation was a de-facto Russification process, as the Soviet identity was originally based off of the Russian identity.[204] "Therefore these nationalities and nations which oppose this process of standardization and Russification are mostly persecuted. The current type of "Soviet common man", that is, the type of person with Russian mentality and Russian state world-outlook is less persecuted in the USSR."[205] The standardization of the Soviet man, as described by the Ukrainian, can be understood as the homo sovieticus concept. Russians did not face as harsh of punishment for their nationalism as they did not resist the homo sovieticus, in fact, the homo sovieticus resembled the Russian identity. Thus, the marginalized identities in the Caucasus were punished not only for their nationalism or resistance, but for their Caucasus-ness and its non-conformity to the homo sovieticus.

The Soviet state took on the role of the hero in the Caucasus region where there were pre-existing hostilities amongst the Caucasus countries which worsened Caucasus relations. The hostilities between Armenians and Azerbaijanis at that time continued despite the shared Soviet borders: "Moreover, there are minorities who don't like each other … Armenians have always gotten help from the Russians and worked against the Azerbaidzhanians … The Georgians and the Armenians are used as a weapon by the Russians against the other people."[206] The Azerbaijani interviewee viewed the other Caucasus countries as enemies with Russia as the main instigator behind the hostilities. This showed a divide within the region and the influence that the Soviet state had over the Caucasus countries. This influence can be traced back to

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[202] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 35, Case 118/(NY)1517 (interviewer W.T., type A4). Male, 40, Ukrainian, Secondary school teacher. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.26-27.

[203] Ibid., pp.26-27.

[204] Hagendoorn et al. 'Inter-Ethnic Preferences and Ethnic Hierarchies in the Former Soviet Union'. p.485.

[205] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 35, Case 118/(NY)1517 (interviewer W.T., type A4). Male, 40, Ukrainian, Secondary school teacher. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.26-27.

[206] Ibid., p.51.

the annexation of the Caucasus after the fall of the Russian Empire, which consisted of self-interest out of fear for Pan-Turkism spreading towards Russia.[207] The Chechen interviewee explained this by stating: "The Soviets did not get control of the Caucasus until 1923, and then it was by means of force and deception."[208] His use of "force and deception" showed the unwillingness of the Caucasus people to be a part of the USSR at that time. The dominating presence of the Soviet state in the Caucasus was seen as unnecessary heroism by the Russian interviewee: "This means, that you sometimes get unnecessary heroism on the part of the Russian. That is, he does not have much self control."[209] This self-determined role of the hero or mediator from the Soviet Union backfired on them as they ultimately became the shared enemy of the Caucasus: "Naturally, the minorities of the people of Russia are enemies of the Russian people."[210] The mediator role that the Soviet Union took turned into the role of the enemy that caused more instability in the region, leaving the minority groups to bear the consequences.

The people of the Caucasus were proud of their identity, which the USSR tried to suppress. When asked regarding the differences between the Caucasus people and other nationalities in the Soviet Union, the Avaret interviewee responded: "Yes, among us there are any so-called bandits. They are people who are not really thieves, but have left their village to go live in the forests, because they know that if they stay in the village, they will either go to jail or to Siberia, and they figure that if they are going to die, they might as well die in their home country."[211] The people of the Caucasus would have rather died in the wild of their own country, than be deported to work abroad by the USSR. This instance showed the love that the Caucasus people had for their country and nationality, in comparison to the state. While this nationalism was punished by the state, it also reinforced it among the Caucasus people as described by the Cherkess interviewee: "Well, again hunger and famine. The rulers and the Kremlin always used this to break nationalism. In 1943 to 1946 they exiled

[207] Blank. 'The Formation of the Soviet North Caucasus 1918–24'. p.17.
[208] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 434 (interviewer J.R., type A4). Male, 54, Chechen, Laborer. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.45.
[209] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 4, Case 32 (interviewer J.R., type A3). Male, over 52, Great Russian, In exile or in concentration camp. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.41.
[210] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 3, Case 24 (interviewer K.G., type A3). Male, 37, Azerbaidjan, Doctor. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.51.
[211] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver. Widener Library, Harvard University. p.86.

some of the Caucasian people, some went to the Caucasus mountains organized national partisan movements with the beginning of their exile. The organizer of one of these bands was a Chechen."[212] Caucasus solidarity was strengthened amidst the attempts to suppress Caucasus nationalism by the USSR.

Conclusion

The forced efforts to create equality throughout the USSR negatively affected the daily lives of the Caucasus citizen, as their identity was meant to be replaced with one that fit the homo sovieticus concept. To start, the confiscation of land and property, which is an important part of the Caucasus identity, negatively affected the agrarian prevalent culture that belonged to the region. While this redistribution was meant to bring equality to all Soviet citizens, in reality, it ruined the lives and spirit of the Caucasus citizens. This was reflected in the erasure of the Caucasus languages within the news and media, which resulted in the dependence of the Russian language. The Russian language, which was mandatory to learn as it was the "Liberation Language", was meant to connect the republics of the Soviet Union. However, the proficiency in the Russian language became the new norm for the Caucasus citizens to adhere to, and any deviation restricted their career opportunities. This bias towards Russian speakers and by extension, the Russian identity, continuously hindered the Caucasus people as they needed to adapt to the homo sovieticus standard.

The preference for the Russian identity could be seen within Sovietisation, which was a de-facto Russification process for the Caucasus people. The Soviet identity was based off of Russian culture, history and the "Liberation "Language". This constant replacing of the Caucasus identity throughout different policies had the opposite desired effect from the perspective of the Soviet regime, as it strengthened the inter-Caucasus relations and nationalism for some. This nationalism influenced the planned resistance from different Caucasus groups who clung to their identity. The rising nationalism and the process of Russification in the Caucasus region proved to be a self-perpetuating cycle, as the forced assimilation to the USSR was both a cause and effect for the rising Caucasus nationalism.

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[212] Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 18, Case 344 (interviewer M.L., type A4). Male, 26, Cherkessian. Widener Library, Harvard University. pp.28-29.

Final conclusion

Soviet Union governance on the Caucasus region and its people proved to have counterproductive effects compared to the intended homogenised result that resembled the homo sovieticus. The homo sovieticus, a concept that describes the ideal Soviet citizen in the eyes of the regime, was an identity forced upon the Caucasus by Lenin and Stalin until the end of their rule. Sovietisation, a de-facto Russification process, was a process that challenged the Caucasus identity. However, this process in turn strengthened the Caucasus identity and solidarity as a form of resistance in different ways.

The cycle of forced assimilation and rising resistance of Caucasus people can be seen through the aspects of religion, education and their overall livelihood. Religion, religious practices and religious institutions were significant factors in the identities of Caucasus citizens. Atheist state propaganda within the Caucasus meant to unite all nationalities through forced atheism, however, the Caucasus citizens felt united over their disapproval of the atheist regime instead. Religion continued to play an important part of many of the Caucasus people's lives in secret, which resulted in the domestication of religion.

Similarly, the Caucasus region had access to higher forms of education compared to tsarist times, which was meant to be accessible for everyone equally. However, the presence of politics within education led to the singling out of many Caucasus citizens because of their social background, lack of financial funds or, relatedly, their religious identity. The social background of the Caucasus people often consisted of agricultural peasantry, which classified them as a kulak. This fact in particular targeted many Caucasus citizens from participating in the Komsomol, a political youth group which almost everybody was a member of to gain educational benefits.

The daily lives of the Caucasus people were affected due to their non-Russian identity and location. Moving was a difficult and bureaucratic process which was limited to those with enough money, career opportunities and/or relations to the Party. The need for Caucasus people to conform to Soviet governing and ideology also manifested in the censorship of news, which limited people in accessing news regarding their religion or cultural music. This was also seen in Russian language

learning, as Caucasus citizens were required to gain proficiency in Russian to partake in their education and careers. As described by the Azerbaijani interviewee, who saw his career opportunities be affected by the Russian language, Russian was not worthy of the title "Liberation language".

Soviet policies, from the redistribution of property to forced atheism, never meant to give space to the Caucasus identity. Meant to unite, Sovietisation was a de-facto Russification process that negatively affected the lives of the Caucasus people. This includes the confiscation of their possessions, the culture they could not practice, the religion they were restricted from, the Russian language they had to prioritise, and the educational opportunities they were taken from.

Soviet governance not only affected the Caucasus identity, but also the relationship amongst the Caucasus nationalities. Division amongst Caucasus people as an effect from Soviet policies can be specifically seen in the case of religion and atheist propaganda between Armenian-Azerbaijani tensions. These tensions worsened as a result of atheist propaganda from the regime, which aimed to unite the two republics through Soviet brotherhood. In contrast, Soviet governance, more specifically Sovietisation, strengthened Caucasus bonds because of an increase of shared solidarity amidst the de-facto Russification process. Atheist propaganda and censoring allowed for Caucasus people to help each other continue their religious practices in secret.

The Russian saviour complex, which can be seen in their attempts to be the mediator in the Caucasus, is another reason as to why the Caucasus remained misunderstood and misrepresented. The need to "educate" and "help" the Caucasus from the perspective of the RSFSR showed the established hierarchical dynamic between the regime and the Caucasus region. The homo sovieticus and thus Russification process throughout the Lenin-Stalin eras were forms of this Russian saviour complex which persists within the historiography that centers Russia at the cost of other nationalities within the Soviet Union.

The information from the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System transcripts mostly critique the Soviet regime as the interviewees are refugees with differing reasons to not continue living there anymore. This means that the information used from the transcripts throughout this research can be seen as potentially one-sided. In addition, living in Western countries such as Germany or the United States could have altered the memories of these interviewees over time. However, despite its limitations,

the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System interviews have provided the best opportunity to bring in the lost Caucasus voice within this field of research. The main aim of this thesis is to challenge the dominant Russian presence within history, as the Caucasus is underrepresented within this field of research and both Russian or Western archives failed to include these voices. Although these interview transcripts rely on interviewee's memories, which change over time, their experiences and overall opinions regarding Soviet society have aided this research unlike any other potential archive. Soviet governance failed different groups of people in society, specifically those who were religious and/or from the Caucasus. To understand this, the experiences of those who fled because they felt the Soviet system marginalised them are especially important for this research.

This thesis relied on the information from the Harvard Project archive only, whereas enlarging the corpus would possibly represent more Caucasus groups than in the current limited corpus. The perspectives of the people from the Caucasus are limited within the Harvard Project currently, as not many interviewees were from the Caucasus. To combat this, the use of published memoirs, diaries and private documents from Caucasus people would be ideal. Instead of relying on the close reading of a few transcripts from the Caucasus as conducted for this thesis, a distant reading approach would be needed for a larger corpus to fully capture all valuable details. The lost perspectives of the Caucasus on the Soviet system and possibly on other Caucasus groups would enrich this research in many ways. More specifically, the perspectives of Armenians and Azerbaijanis on the Nagorno-Karabakh area and how this dispute was handled by the Soviet regime to calm the autonomous region. These perspectives from the Caucasus continue to be lost in history due to their marginalisation by Russian scholarship on Soviet history and failed to be deemed as important in the West.

The majority of theory regarding the Soviet regime and Soviet society centralised Russia at the cost of people from the smaller republics. This showed through the way in which the Caucasus specifically was represented by historians. These historians took on an imperialist perspective putting Russia as the centre of the Soviet Union. In comparison, the Caucasus was subjected to the imperialist views in ways where they would be labelled "culturally backward" or that the annexation of the Caucasus in the early twentieth century was necessary for the overall development of the region. However, although the sources that de-centralise Russia were limited, this only

supports the overall argument of the thesis. The Caucasus region and its people were and still are misrepresented within history due to its subjugation to different empires (Ottoman, Russian) and the rewriting of history during the Soviet Union. As this carried over to contemporary times, the Caucasus as a region remains divided because of the lasting influence from the different empires. The Caucasus region remains misrepresented if not for scholars to challenge the dominant narrative that centralises Russia as the protagonist in the Caucasus story. Thus, the sources that centralised Russia served to illustrate the lasting effects of Soviet governance on the rewriting of history and marginalisation of Caucasus people.

My thesis within this field of research challenged the dominant narrative of Russian imperialism within the Soviet Union in order to understand how the Caucasus voice was lost within history. The Caucasus perspective within Soviet society remains relatively unknown compared to the Russian perspective. At many points within this research the perspective of a Russian interviewee is used to understand the Caucasus voice, specifically regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Future research within this field may focus on the Caucasus perspective amongst themselves within the region as to understand and compare their opinions. For example, during an era of Sovietisation, what did the Georgians think of the controversial Nagorno-Karabakh region and how did Soviet governance potentially influence their standpoint? Like this, the Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian and the Northern Caucasus perspective can be found, rather than grouping the region all together for one generalised perspective as done throughout this thesis. A new dominant narrative can be formed this way that continuous to challenge the current hierarchical position of Russia within Soviet scholarship. Uunderstanding these diverse perspectives of the Caucasus will hopefully help to address the contemporary geopolitical issues that have sadly persisted in the region for centuries.

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