**7. Resistance, Discourse and Nationalism in the March 1956 Events in Georgia**

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As Lynne Viola has observed, resistance can be seen as a “prism that refracts and distills what otherwise might be opaque dimensions of the social, cultural and political history” of society and sheds light on the interrelationships between state and society.[[1]](#footnote-1) In the context of the Stalin era Soviet Union, the study of resistance allows one to “glimpse the persistence of autonomous or semi-autonomous cultures, subcultures and identities surviving within the hegemonic culture of Stalinism,”[[2]](#footnote-2) to view how they interact with the state, and to explore how the state perceived society and reacted to pressure from it. In a regime that aspired to complete transformation of society and a totalizing mobilization of the population, public discourse and individual identities, the space for the existence and expression of such autonomous or semi-autonomous cultures and identities was probably quite narrow. At the same time, as with other once illiberal and repressive regimes, there is a temptation on the part of present-day scholars and activists to mine incidents of resistance during the Soviet period in search of a “useable past” for the construction of the narrative of the development of nationhood and civil society. The very concept of resistance to the Soviet regime has been the center of much attention and controversy in recent historiography over the past decade, at the same time that increased access to primary sources has provided greater details about specific incidences of such resistance. This discussion has questioned the definition of the concept of resistance in the Soviet context and its applicability to a wide range of attitudes and behaviors, ranging from disgruntlement and cynicism to demonstrations and violent confrontation. It has also touched upon the motivations, intentions and aspirations of those who engaged in resistance, whether they pursued a self-interested agenda and were capable of positioning themselves externally to the state and its ideology and policies (or if in fact such interpretations are ahistorical projections by modern historians of their own values on historical actors), or rather whether resistance must intrinsically have been embedded within the discourse of the regime and the Stalinist worldview.

Much of this discussion concentrated on the 1930s, focused primarily on accommodation and resistance in “everyday life,” and is based on research in Russia. Although national identity has been touched upon in passing as a potential “autonomous or semi-autonomous” culture, the role of nationalism and Soviet nationality policy as a factor in resistance has been largely cursory in the debate, as has been attention to the Soviet periphery. This article will examine the March 1956 events in Georgia, the first significant incident of active protest to take place in the Soviet Union for decades, in the context of this historiographical discussion about resistance with the goal of utilizing this specific case in the Soviet imperial periphery for what it can contribute to our understanding the intersection of interests and discourse in resistance in the USSR.

Although these events occurred three years after the death of Stalin, and were themselves very much a result of the changes just beginning to shake the foundations of the Soviet regime in the post-Stalin era, they nevertheless took place within the context of a society just emerging from the most restrictive years of Stalin’s reign, that was very much shaped by a quarter century of Stalinist transformation, and that was only now receiving signals about the changes to come. This article will explore the usefulness of the subjectivist approach in addressing some of the intriguing questions that these events provoke, and which thus far have only been partially answered in a satisfactory way, and also the implications of the Georgian case for further application of the approach in the Soviet periphery. Why, for example, did the Georgians, who suffered under the Stalin regime and whose independence Stalin had worked so hard to suppress, react so angrily and passionately to the policy of de-Stalinization? What did the protesters actually want and what did they expect to happen as a result? Why did they express their disobedience and dissent so strongly and so publically, despite the repressive nature of the regime? Did they do so despite fear and trepidation, and could they not foresee negative consequences? And finally, were these by and large protests against the regime itself, or rather against a particular policy line, and if the latter, can they still be qualified as resistance?

**The Concept of Resistance**

The recent literature on resistance in Soviet everyday life flourished with the partial opening of party and secret police archives during the 1990s, which provided direct evidence to contest the Cold War totalitarian view of Soviet society as atomized and passive. Leading scholars of the “revisionist” school, such as Shiela Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola, were now clearly able to demonstrate how Soviet peasants and urban dwellers were able to both actively and passively resist regime policies, through public demonstrations and riots and also through foot-dragging, dissimilation and the manipulation of patronage, and they saw such resistance as motivated by self-interest and strategies for survival and prosperity in the conditions of Soviet society. This literature gave important new insights into the complexity of interactions between the rulers and the ruled in the Stalinist Soviet Union, yet its extremely broad conceptualization of resistance undermined the usefulness of the term. In an important edited volume on resistance, Viola backs away from stating a specific definition of the term, placing resistance instead on a continuum from passive accommodation to active resistance.[[3]](#footnote-3) As Michael David-Fox points out, when the definition is .” . . expanded to include “passive” resistance, the boundaries can never be ascertained.”[[4]](#footnote-4) An expansive definition of the term that includes both attitudes and behavior (sentiment and action) has the potential epistemological problem of creating a tautology, if the latter are explained by the former (or vice versa) when both components are included in the definition of the concept. Several recent scholars have endeavored to focus the definition on active resistance, such as Mark Edele, who avoids the term “unless the participants were armed,”[[5]](#footnote-5) and Timothy Johnston, who more precisely defines it as “action or speech that was consciously intended to undermine the practices or institutions of Soviet power.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This more specific definition avoids the problem of tautology through its focus on behavior (action or speech), while still leaving space for the examination of the ways in which attitudes inform intentions.

**Resistance and Subjectivity**

A challenge to the revisionist approach of self-interested resistance in everyday life has come from the so-called “subjectivist” or “discursive” approach to the issue of dissent in the Soviet (and particularly the Stalinist) period. This approach focuses specifically on intentions and motivations to action, and attempts to historically contextualize the meaning of resistance in the Soviet system. Based on Stephen Kotkin’s observation that the Soviet regime incorporated the population through very potent policies of social identification,[[7]](#footnote-7) which in turn drew upon Michel Foucault’s concept of the internalization of power to posit that the state became “internal” to the “Stalinist subject,” the authors of this approach proposed that Soviet subjects were not able to think outside of official discourse, that this discourse shaped people’s categories of thinking and in turn their view of reality.

In a direct statement of this approach in relation to the issue of resistance, Jochen Hellbeck argued that earlier approaches to the subject tended to privilege anti-regime expression as the more “authentic” and thus obscured the larger dynamic of social mobilization undertaken by the Soviet party-state and discounted the genuine empowering and self-aggrandizing appeal that illiberal regimes and their ideologies hold for their citizens.[[8]](#footnote-8) The embeddedness of the individual in the Soviet political system prescribed the ways in which dissent and resistance could be imagined and “the way people may have been deeply committed to the principle assumptions of the regime.” Hellbeck thus sought to “historically contextualize the meaning of dissent in the Stalinist system” by viewing such expressions through the “trajectories of mobilization and self-activation” of the revolutionary Soviet regime and ideology, a regime that required individuals to “involve themselves in the revolutionary movement totally and unconditionally.” Thus when Soviet citizens criticized or resisted, this “illiberal modern selfhood” meant that people expressed themselves “within the frames of meaning laid out by the Bolshevik regime” and not through an outlook external to those frames of meaning. It was precisely from this framework that those resisting “ . . . derive[d] their authority to speak out and assume a critical stance.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Scholars of the “subjectivist” or discursive approach have been criticized for ignoring relevant earlier scholarship in an attempt to project originality and to portray their approach as a full-fledged “paradigm shift,” and of dismissing whole categories of evidence that are less supportive of their positions (criticizing especially official and secret police reports (*svodki*) *in* favor of unpublished biographies and memoirs). More crucially, the all-encompassing nature of their claim, that Soviet subjects could not possibly think outside of official discourse and that “there were no coherent, explicitly formulated alternatives to the cognitive (and affective) framework offered by the party state,”[[10]](#footnote-10) seems increasingly overambitious, a “totalizing theory” in Fitzpatrick’s estimation[[11]](#footnote-11) and “empirically wrong” in Timothy Johnson’s words,[[12]](#footnote-12) the “pioneering spirit” of which “may lead to over interpretation of the evidence” in John Keep’s.[[13]](#footnote-13) Societies, of course, are extremely complex entities with many layers and sub-layers that are sometimes in conflict with one another. Motivations for action such as resistance can similarly be multiple and varied, and as Viola points out, the appearance of solidarity during protest may be simply the creation of a common external threat that “papers over normal everyday divisions that run through society.’[[14]](#footnote-14)

**Subjectivity and Georgian National Stalinism**

Yet despite the objections above, the subjectivist approach may be very powerful in understanding the motivations of many, if not most, of the participants of the March 1956 demonstrations in Georgia. As I have argued elsewhere (and as the Georgian Central Committee itself reported) the vast majority of those participants were urban young people, and many were students and younger members of the intelligentsia.[[15]](#footnote-15) More than half of those detained on the night of March 9 were either Komsomol or Party members (199 individuals out of 375, according to a telegram from Georgian KGB chief A. Inauri to Moscow on 26 March).[[16]](#footnote-16) Further, according to the secret official lists, 9 out of 21 of those killed in the crackdown were indicated as Komsomol members, as were 23 out of the 54 wounded.[[17]](#footnote-17) Thus many of the participants were of the generation that had grown up almost entirely within the milieu of Stalinism and were steeped in it, and from the social layer whose career paths and ambitions were closely tied to the official sphere. The report of the Georgian Central Committee to the Central Committee in Moscow stated that “From the side of the Georgian nationality, mainly representatives of the intelligentsia and students and studying youth, things were said that Russians do not want the name of Stalin because he was Georgian, and they feel that Russians want to destroy Georgia gradually and send away (*vysylat’*) all the Georgians.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

Both the public behavior and statements of the protesters and the demands included in the multitude of signed and anonymous letters and notes that were either delivered to the government or confiscated at the protest sites are framed unambiguously and exclusively within the Stalinist discourse: speeches, poetry and slogans about Lenin and Stalin, demands for the showing of films about the life and activities of both Lenin and Stalin, demands for the return of Stalinist banners and portraits that had since been removed, that the Stalin Prize and the name of the Stalin Constitution should be restored, that the publishing of the collective works of Stalin be completed, and so forth.[[19]](#footnote-19) Much of the anger seems directed at this new policy line of the state, which they saw as violating the Stalinist norms. The demonstrations themselves made use of all of the standard physical symbols (banners, flower wreaths, portraits, aerial flyovers) of Stalinist public events.[[20]](#footnote-20) One gets the strong sense from these sources that the participants truly believed that they were in the right and on the correct side of history, and that they understood the anti-Stalin decisions that somebody in the government had apparently taken to be deeply mistaken. As one anonymous letter writer stated, “With this artificial and hastily dashed together (‘*sostriapannoe’*) closed letter, you will see with what artificial means they are trying to degrade Stalin and bury his cause. In acquainting the people with this letter, they will be convinced that we are in the right, if anybody doubts the justice of our cause.”[[21]](#footnote-21) This outrage seems to be not merely a cynical manipulation of discourses and symbols, but rather to reflect strongly held beliefs. There are, for example, dozens of anonymous notes to the government criticizing various teachers, school directors and rectors for not letting their students out to come to join the demonstrations. Far from suspecting that the party and state may have ordered this, the writers appear to see this as an unpardonable political error on the part of these individuals, and they assume that the party and state will “send a delegation” to rectify the situation and allow the students to participate (or to do so by telephone: many such notes include the name and phone number of the offending individual).[[22]](#footnote-22)

The case of the 1956 events in Georgia also suggests some ways in which Soviet national identity was incorporated into Stalinist discourse and individual subjectivity in the Stalinist periphery. The mechanisms and outcomes of this certainly varied among different ethnic groups with different population sizes and official and unofficial standing within the Soviet hierarchy of nationalities. With the change in emphasis starting in the mid-1930s away from the “flowering of many nations” to the focus on larger nationalities with union republics,[[23]](#footnote-23) the latter continued to receive increased status, investment, privileges and opportunities. The party and state throughout the Stalin period contributed to and encouraged the development (in officially approved ways) of the national projects of these larger ethnic groups, which made state-approved national rhetoric an essential part of the local discourse of Stalinism. This was nowhere more the case than in Soviet Georgia in the Stalin period, where (as I have argued more thoroughly elsewhere) the republic held a special status within the Soviet hierarchy of nations (in part because of the fact that the Great Leader himself was Georgian).[[24]](#footnote-24) John Armstrong wrote, for example, that “[t]he extraordinarily high sense of Georgian national identification probably rests more firmly on the unusual role of the Georgians under Stalin, when they shared the role of dominant Soviet ethnic group with the Russians.”[[25]](#footnote-25) In his classic *Soviet Russian Nationalism,* Frederick Barghoorn wrote “There is no doubt in my mind, on the basis of conversations with Soviet acquaintances during my four years in Moscow from 1943-7 and interviews with Soviet refugees, that there was considerable resentment among Russians against Stalin, Beria, and other Georgians in high places,”[[26]](#footnote-26) and that even in the period just after the death of Stalin “[t]he Georgians, at least, retained a position substantially preferable to that of most other non-Russians.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

In a letter to the USSR Defense Minister Marshal Georgii Zhukov that was sent shortly after March 1956 and then circulated among USSR Central Committee members, its author G.V. Sukiasov, an Armenian army major and engineer originally from Tbilisi and present during those events, relays the situation at the time from the vantage point of a representative of an ethnic minority in Georgia:

I have come to the firm conviction that in recent years (about the last 16-18 years) Leninist nationality policy has become significantly distorted in Georgia, and the internationalist essence of the nationality policy of our Party has become emasculated. Wittingly or unwittingly, this policy has become national not only in form, but in content.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Now you cannot find in the city or anywhere in the republic even a slightly significant department, enterprise, or educational institution someplace where the director or the head is not a Georgian.[[29]](#footnote-29)

The misfortune is that frequently in [state and party] institutions Soviet laws, decrees, labor discipline, ethics, and everything else become mandatory for everybody, except for Georgians. The Georgians easily sidestep these things, recalling that since the leadership is “theirs” it won’t give offense. And many such leading Georgian comrades genuinely believe that they are superior, smarter and more capable than comrades of other ethnicities, and that only they have the right to be in command, as in Georgia they are people of the first sort, and everybody else is a second class citizen. For an entire category of people (including people in the leadership) the slogan “Georgia for the Georgians” is in effect. [[30]](#footnote-30)

Sukiasov pointed out the direct connection between the growth of Georgian nationalism and the “Stalin personality cult”:

But this artificial (and I emphasize, precisely artificial) planting of people from one ethnicity in the leadership posts (as earlier there were people of other nationalities, and they were removed), in this case of Georgians, has led, I believe, to the development among a particular part of the local intelligentsia of blatant nationalism and to a forgetting of the principle of proletarian internationalism.

This “rebirth” [of Georgian chauvinism] in recent years in Georgia has exceeded all acceptable boundaries. In Tbilisi one can hear open expressions from particular individuals that, say, only Georgians are able to lead the people (they mean the entire Soviet Union) which, of course, to a large degree, was facilitated by the personality cult of I.V. Stalin . . . This nationalistic poison is beginning to rot the minds of greater and greater numbers of people. [[31]](#footnote-31)

What resulted from this situation was a kind of indigenous fusion of Georgian nationalism (again, within sharply prescribed boundaries) with Stalinist discourse, a kind of Stalinist Georgian nationalism (or Georgian national Stalinism).[[32]](#footnote-32) There most likely were, to be sure, some autonomous national discourses in Georgia, such as those described by Tamara Dragadze in rural Georgia, in which women were seen as the preservers of Georgian traditions and taught their children to be critical towards the larger Soviet world. [[33]](#footnote-33) Yet for a major and privileged nationality such as the Georgians, instead of existing as an autonomous subculture with an alternate discourse to that of the regime, this officially sanctioned version of national identity was deeply enmeshed in people’s mindset with the aspirations of the regime. In its own analysis of the March events the Georgian Central Committee reported that “The Cult of personality of Stalin in Georgia was combined with national feeling. It took on a particularly mutated (*urodlivuiu*) form in Georgia . . . the opinion formed that the Georgian people had made particular contributions (*zaslugi*) to humanity and all this was linked with the name of Stalin. In the works of specific scientists and works of literature the Georgian past was idealized . . . This mood was particularly evident among the youth and students and part of the intelligentsia.” [[34]](#footnote-34) This also demonstrates one of the ways in which official Soviet identity could be comprised of multiple, complementary identities. Rather than a competition between rival discourses, that of “pure Stalinism” and Soviet nationality policy and that of Georgian pre-eminence, in this case the emergence of a Stalinist Georgian nationalism represented a “*bricolage*” of the two. [[35]](#footnote-35)

The new party line of de-Stalinization seems to have been viewed by many (if not most) of the Georgian protestors as an outrage against their deeply held beliefs about Stalin and against the standing of the Georgians within the regime. The Georgian Central Committee reported that “The decisive course of the Party on the liquidation of the Cult of Personality of Stalin is viewed by the majority of the population as diminishing the accomplishments of Stalin and as an insult to the national feelings of Georgians.”[[36]](#footnote-36) There is clearly a strong element of rational self-interest here: as I have also argued elsewhere, part of the motivation for the protests seems to have been the threat that participants perceived in the new policy line to the very standing of Georgia and the Georgians in the ethnic hierarchy, that they stood to lose their favored status and all of the privileges and advantages that went along with it, such as access to educational and professional opportunities in Moscow and elsewhere in the USSR as well as within their own republic.[[37]](#footnote-37) One anonymous letter writer, for example, complained that “We must clean the Party and Soviet apparatus of bribe takers who send people of other nationalities to fill vacant positions while Georgian Communists walk the streets without work.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Another demanded that better quality consumer goods be delivered to Georgia, “so that Georgians arriving in Moscow do not have to buy them there, and so that they don’t call Georgians traders and dogs.”[[39]](#footnote-39) While many Soviet citizens were shocked and outraged at the assault on Stalin and the “Cult of Personality,” only in Georgia (and there only among ethnic Georgians) did people take to the streets to protest. This strongly suggests that the sense of national “insult” and threat to national aspirations was a key element, in combination with identification with the Stalinist discourse that provided the “tipping point” to action.

This leads to the central question of what exactly the participants were protesting against, in what ways they framed their protestation, and how those perceptions and demands changed during the course of the events and in the wake of them. Very clearly, at least initially, the protests were directed towards the particular policy of de-Stalinization and not against the legitimacy of the regime, and the modes of the protests and the rhetoric in which they were couched were very much those of the regime itself. In the participants’ view, the new policy was flawed precisely because it did not meet the goals of the regime. The vast majority of the participants seemed to be demanding a return to the Stalinist status quo, a restoration of the Stalinist assumptions and aspirations (which also they also likely perceived as very much in their favor). As the protests progressed, some of the demands escalated to outright dissatisfaction with the perceived ineffectiveness of the local leadership under First Secretary V. Mzhavanadze[[40]](#footnote-40) and to calls for the resignation of the members of the “collegial leadership” seen as responsible for the anti-Stalin policy, especially Khrushchev, Bulganin and Mikoyan (some appealed for Molotov to take over).[[41]](#footnote-41) If one accepts the conception of Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakawski of ideology in the Soviet context not as specific social and economic theories, but rather as the ability or willingness “to accept whatever the supreme authority might proclaim today, tomorrow or in a year’s time,”[[42]](#footnote-42) the shock cognitive dissonance caused for many Georgians by the events perhaps mortally wounded their capacity for uncynical acceptance of the proclamations of the regime, undermining a fundamental pillar of the Soviet regime.

Thus for the Soviet party-state, even in its early post-Stalinist form, a challenge to the party line was inherently at the same time a threat to the basis of Soviet power. The regime apparently regarded the demands as fundamentally threatening, and the resulting violence radicalized some young Georgians and led them to a genuinely anti-Soviet nationalism (sentiment that spread to a much larger part of the population through historical memory over the course of the subsequent decades),[[43]](#footnote-43) even though most likely at the time the majority of the protestors desired a return to what they saw as the founding principles of the regime and not its overthrow or succession from it. There were some statements about Georgia seceding from the Soviet Union, but these appeared later in the events and were rare.[[44]](#footnote-44) Similarly, many of the participants seemed to be deeply shocked at the violent reaction to the regime on the night of March 9-10.[[45]](#footnote-45) Because of this regime discourse-embedded nature of the protests, the participants seemed to have joined in with little sense of risk or expectation of negative consequences. As far as they were concerned, they were doing the right and proper (and Stalinist) thing, and doing it in ways in which public participation had always been solicited in their experience. The surprise, shock and outrage at the violent repression of the demonstrations by the state were therefore especially stark. The subjective mindset led the participants to misunderstand some fundamental realities of the regime. The crackdown did lead to a radicalization among small groups of young students and intelligentsia members, and perhaps led a part of the population to begin to rethink some of their most deeply held assumptions. But most people framed their indignation within the context of Soviet justice, that the regime (and particular irresponsible leaders) had acted contrary to Soviet principles (of justice and nationality policy), and they sought accommodation rather than regime change or national secession.[[46]](#footnote-46) As one anonymous author argued in a letter to First Secretary Mzhavanadze, “The Georgian people, one and all, deplore the shameful action of Khrushchev towards the Great Leader Stalin. Those who are real members of the Party of Lenin-Stalin, the real Communists, will not tolerate the degrading (‘*ugnetenie*’) of the Georgian people. Do you not hear the indignation (‘*vozmushchenie*’) of the Georgian people with the speech of Khrushchev, that non-Communist, non-Bolshevik statement? In reality his words were counterrevolutionary, and not appropriate for the Soviet people. You, the government of Georgia, if you love the Georgian people, its leader the great Stalin, you should defend Stalin from insult. Now you know.”[[47]](#footnote-47)

Thus can the March 1956 Georgian protests be properly regarded as resistance to the regime at all? A minority of young Georgians did begin to direct their dissent against the existence of the regime itself, and national sentiment (and anti-Russian sentiment) increased significantly after the events and directly as a result of them. The demonstrations did involve violent confrontation, which seems at least in part to have come from the protestors themselves (mostly in self-defense during the melee around the Stalin monument on the embankment in the early hours of March 10, though there were numerous reports of the use of stones and sticks prior to that).[[48]](#footnote-48) But for the vast majority of the population and of the participants the protests represented selective opposition to a particular policy line. If one includes in the definition of resistance action or speech that intends to undermine practices as well as institutions of the regime, then this case meets the strict definition. Yet ultimately these protests, by and large, were situated in the “grey area” between support and resistance to the Soviet regime. Similarly, the line between rational self-interest and regime embedded discourse in in the motivations of the participants is far from clear in this case. In the same way that national identity and Georgian nationalism became fused with the Stalinist discourse, self-interest (in the sense of the willingness to reverse a policy perceived as less favorable) coincided with the (still dominant) Stalinist discourse and was embedded within it. This self-interest was not necessarily “liberal” (tending instead more towards ethno-nationalism) and was not intrinsically external to the state and its ideology, but was both rooted in its precepts and framed in its language and symbols.

**Conclusions: March 1956, Subjectivity and Soviet Nationalism**

Ultimately how useful is the subjectivity approach in interpreting the March 1956 events in Georgia? The participants of these events surely had multiple and often divergent motivations. Yet a purely narrative or “rational actor” approach to explaining people’s intentions and expectations would only tell part of the story. Individuals fashion their identities based on cultural norms and within the historical context, which in turn sets the sociopolitical constraint that they live within. Social identity and orientation to action is constructed, but historical context defines those parameters. Despite its drawbacks and occasional overreach, the discourse of the subjectivity approach may be particularly helpful in this case in understanding the mindset of the actors at the time because it captures the context of that mindset, which would otherwise be inexplicable from the perspective of later periods. The subjectivity approach argues that ideology and transformative mobilization in Soviet society acted to create individual experience and identity. This can ignore those who did not feel part of the Soviet holistic project to reshape humanity, and underestimate the degree to which people may have understood that institutional structures could be navigated and manipulated. Yet in this case Stalinist subjectivity, when understood in the local, Georgian context of fusing individual Stalinist discourse with the discourse of Soviet nationality policy (especially in the Georgians’ understanding of the latter), would seem to be a powerful tool in understanding the motivations of a significant part of the participants, the ways in which they framed their expressions of protest and the reasons why they did so, and in understanding how the participants themselves understood the values and goals of the state and their relationship to it. Both self-interest and the Stalinist world view were contributing factors to the protests, and this self-interest was compatible with regime discourse in people’s understanding, until the actions of the regime challenged such assumptions. Georgian national identity, at least in the broadly accepted Soviet framework, was not an autonomous sphere in this case, but was firmly embedded in the Georgian interpretation and understanding of Stalinist discourse. The subjectivity approach can help us to understand these events within their historical context, and also to understand how that very context may have affected the actors and their ability to understand the changes that were taking place during the period. It can also help us to avoid a politicized narrative of the events or a romanticizing of the actors’ motivations removed from the historical context and the modes of discourse relevant in the period and the situation. The case also demonstrates the ways in which the regime, at both the local and central levels, was obligated, after reverting to violence to suppress the demonstrations, to begin a process of reorienting the population in Georgia to the altered discourse of the party and the state according to the new policy line and the new realities of Soviet rule in the post-Stalinist period (although they ways in which this was attempted may be the topic of another research project).

1. Lynne Viola, “Popular Resistance in the 1930s: Soliloquy of a Devil’s Advocate,” in Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist and Marshall Poe, eds., *The Resistance Debate in Russian and Soviet History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2003), p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lynne Viola, “Introduction,” *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Michael David-Fox, “Whither Resistance?” in Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist and Marshall Poe, eds., *The Resistance Debate in Russian and Soviet History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2003), p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Mark Edele, *Stalinist Society: 1928-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet: Rumor, Identity and Everyday Life under Stalin 1939-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. xxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 22-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Jochen Hellbeck, “Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent,” in Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist and Marshall Poe, eds., *The Resistance Debate in Russian and Soviet History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2003), pp. 103-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., pp. 106-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. B. Studer and H. Haumann, eds, “Introduction,” *Stalinistische Subjekte: Individuum und System in der Sowjetunion und der Komintern 1929-1953* (Zurich: Zurich Chronos, 2006), p. 57, cited in Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Johnston, *Being Soviet,* p. xxii. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. John Keep, “Recent Western Views of Stalin’s Russia: Social and Cultural Aspects,” in Harold Shukman, ed. *Stalinism Revisited* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Viola, *Contending with Stalinism*. p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Timothy Blauvelt, “Status Shift and Ethnic Mobilisation in the March 1956 Events in Georgia,” *Europe-Asia Studies,* v. 61, n. 4 (2009), p. 659. See also sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 201 (report of Georgian KGB head Inauri to the Georgian Central Committee), l. 921. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1 (‘Osobye papki’), op. 103, d. 14, ll. 2-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 7, l. 27. In the letter of the Major G.V. Sukiasov to Marshal Zhukov cited below, the author states that “In fairness to the Georgian working class and collective farm peasantry, it must be said (all of these, of course, are my own personal observations and deductions) that they are barely infected by the spirit of unhealthy nationalism. This evil emanates from a particular part of the Georgian intelligentsia: from students, teachers, various middle-ranking bureaucrats, and also from people without particular occupations of whom, incidentally, there are more than in any other place in the Union.” sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 14, op. 103, d. 6, l. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 7, ll. 2-4; f. 1. o. 103, d. 5, ll. 9-10, 18-19, 32, 44; f. 1, op. 103, d. 13, ll. 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 7, l. 3; f. 1, p. 103, d. 14, ll. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 14, l. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 14, ll. 14, 15, 22, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-39* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001) and Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review,* v. 53, *n. 2* (1994), pp. 414-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Blauvelt, “Status Shift and Ethnic Mobilisation,” p. 654. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. “The Ethnic Scene in the Soviet Union: The View of the Dictatorship,” in Erich Goldhagen, ed., *Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1968), pp. 227-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 14, op. 103, d. 6, l. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., l. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid., l. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., l. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. While agreeing that, as pointed out by Claire Pogue-Kaiser in her contribution to this volume, Rogers Brubaker has convincingly argued that the in its ethnicity policies the Soviet Union was “anti*nationalist”* but not “anti*national,”* I do not agree that if follows from this that national sentiment on the part of Soviet ethnic groups does not qualify as “nationalist” if the intentions fall short of secession or separatism and full nation-state sovereignty. Many varieties of nationalism historically, and in the Georgian case in particular, have focused on relative status or on political or cultural autonomy in multi-ethnic states (or empires). See, for example, Stephen Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Tamara Dragadze, *Rural Families in Soviet Georgia: A Case Study in Racha Province* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 137-8, cited in Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 115. For a discussion of Stalinist nationalism in Russia, see David Brandenburger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 7, ll. 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See Johnston, *Being Soviet,* pp. xxv-xxvi and xxxi-xxxiv. For a similar discussion about Soviet Armenia, see Maike Lehmann, “The Local Reinvention of the Soviet Project: Nation and Socialism in the Republic of Armenia after 1945,” *Jahrbuhcher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, v. 59, *n. 4* (2011), p. 484 (and cited in Claire Pogue-Kaiser’s chapter in this volume).  [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 013, d. 7, l. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Isaiah Berlin wrote the following in an essay entitled “Four weeks in the Soviet Union” following his meeting with students in Moscow in August 1956: “The most discontented were, among those [students] I met, the Jews and the Georgians . . . The Georgians were worried because they too have begun feeling a certain degree of discrimination among great Russians, and gave lurid accounts of the destruction in which the post-Stalin riots had involved them, in Tiflis and elsewhere in Georgia. They showed no particular passion for Stalin, and indeed the general tone, of the ones I spoke to, markedly lacked any note of hero-worship and tended towards the somewhat cynical quietism which obviously did not make them less obedient or less efficient servants of the regime.” In Isaiah Berlin, *The Soviet Mind: Russian Culture under Communism,* Henry Hardy, ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2004), p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 14, l. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid., l. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 12, pp. 2-3, 20; f. 96, op. 16, d. 416, l. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 5, l. 30; f. 1, op. 103, d. 12, pp. 2-3. Add citation of Lur’e. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Cited in Edele, *Stalinist Society,* p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. On this point, see Stephen Jones, “Georgia: Nationalism from Under the Rubble,” in L. Barrington, ed. *Nationalism after Independence: the Post-Soviet States* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), p. 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 7, l. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 212, ll. 40, 63-78, 78-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See for example, see sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 3, d. 14, ll. 7, 30, 32, and the letters to the editor of the newspaper *komunisti* in sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 212, particularly one scrawled in red pencil across an article denouncing the “Cult of Personality” (l. 29). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 3, d. 12, ll. 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. For example, sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 7, l. 9-10; f. 1, op. 103, d. 5, l. 4; f.14, op. 31, d. 211, l. 46. There were also threats reported earlier on March 9 on the part of the protestors to use violence if their demands were not met (“to enter active struggle”) and to seize the telegraph and newspaper editorial offices “even if this means spilling blood.” sak’art’velos šss ark’ivi (II), f. 1, op. 103, d. 7, l. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)