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PERSIAN COMMUNITY OF VLADIKAVKAZ IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIOPOLITICAL CHANGES (1917-1930)

Abstract. This article examines the Persian community of Vladikavkaz during the early 20th-century revolutions, the Civil War and its aftermath, repeated shifts in political regimes, and the establishment of Soviet rule. The significance of this study lies in the current magnitude of migration flows, the diaspora's role as a key actor in international relations, and the limited knowledge available on the Persian community of the North Caucasus during the Soviet era, along with the historiographical situation. Notably, Iranian historians have previously believed that Persians who suffered from pogroms emigrated to their homeland in 1919; the pre-revolutionary Russian sources, with their varied terminology for Persians (Persians, Shiites, Tatars, etc.), have contributed to confusion regarding the ethnicity of migrants. This article introduces previously uncirculated sources that unequivocally demonstrate the presence of a Persian community in Vladikavkaz during the period under investigation, rather than simply an Azerbaijani community. This research employs a historical-systemic methodology, examining all events, plots, and narrative materials as a single process of adaptation by Persian migrants to a new political regime. The analysis of periodicals and official documentation, including meeting minutes and reports from various national structures, reveals practices of "indigenization" towards the Persians. The study uncovers the consequences of transitioning from traditional diaspora institutions to new forms of support for national minorities, and the role these plays in engaging Persians in Soviet society. The findings indicate that the liquidation of the Persian community was the result of several interconnected factors: the curtailment of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the abandonment of the "indigenization" policy, an anti-religious campaign, and a shift in the USSR's foreign policy towards Iran. These developments collectively undermined the foundations of ethnic entrepreneurship, fostered ethnocultural discomfort, deprived the Persians of their main consolidating center – the consulate – and ultimately led to the deportation of the remaining Persians in the region to their homeland.

Keywords: Vladikavkaz; revolution; Civil war; sociopolitical transformations; Persians; adaptation; deportation.

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Исследовательская статья

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ПЕРСИДСКАЯ ОБЩИНА ВЛАДИКАВКАЗА В УСЛОВИЯХ ОБЩЕСТВЕННО-ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЙ (1917–1930-е гг.)

Аннотация. Цель настоящей статьи – исследование персидской общины Владикавказа в условиях революций начала XX в., Гражданской войны и ее последствий, неоднократной смены политических режимов и установления советской власти. Актуальность исследования определяется масштабностью современных миграционных потоков, ролью диаспоры как важного актора системы международных связей, а также неизученностью персидской общины Северного Кавказа советского периода и историко-географической ситуацией. В частности, иранские историки считали, что в 1919 г. пострадавшие от погромов персы ушли на родину; дореволюционные российские источники, содержащие множество терминов для обозначения персов (персияне, шииты, татары и пр.), внесли изрядную путаницу в определение этнической принадлежности мигрантов. В настоящей статье впервые введены в научный оборот источники, которые не оставляют сомнений в том, что в рассматриваемый период во Владикавказе сохранялась персидская, а не только азербайджанская община. Представленное исследование проведено с применением историко-системного метода: все события, сюжеты, нарративные материалы рассматриваются как единый процесс адаптации персидских мигрантов к новому политическому режиму. Анализ периодической печати и делопроизводственной документации, в частности, протоколов заседаний и отчетов различных национальных структур, позволил выявить практики «коренизации» в отношении персов. Впервые выявлены результаты смены традиционных диаспорных институтов на новые формы поддержки национальных меньшинств и их роль в вовлечении персов в советское общество. Установлено, что ликвидация персидской общины стала следствием нескольких взаимосвязанных факторов: сворачиванием новой экономической политики (НЭП), отказом от политики «коренизации», антирелигиозной кампанией и изменением внешнеполитического курса СССР в отношении Ирана. Сделан вывод, что в совокупности эти явления подорвали основы этнического предпринимательства, вызвали этнокультурный дискомфорт, лишили персов консульства как главного консолидирующего центра общины, и привели к депортации оставшихся в регионе персов на родину.

Ключевые слова: Владикавказ; революция; Гражданская война; общественно-политические трансформации; персы; адаптация; депортация

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In the second half of the 19th century, the ethnic structure of the North Caucasus, particularly the Terek region, saw the emergence of Persian labor migrants. The economic crisis in Iran, poverty among peasants and artisans, and traditional ties with neighboring Russian territories led to a large-scale migration of the Iranian population, first to Transcaucasia and later to the North Caucasus regions as the local labor market became saturated. The Persians established their own neighborhoods in these new cities and filled various economic niches.

The history of Persian communities in the second half of the 19th century has been studied extensively. The authors of the present paper have examined the reasons and circumstances behind the migration, the migration routes and ethnic and social composition of the migrants, as well as the economic, legal, and sociocultural aspects of their adaptation. They have also explored the activities of Persian vice-consulates and individual consuls, mosques, and charitable organizations in Vladikavkaz [1–3], providing insight into the ways in which these institutions supported the Persian community's adaptation to their new surroundings. Additionally, scholars have investigated collective and individual practices of adaptation to the conditions of a new life, as well as mechanisms for maintaining one's identity, shedding light on the complex and multifaceted nature of the Persian community's experiences during this time period [4–7].

However, the Soviet period in the history of Persian communities has been largely overlooked until now. Iranian historians, relying on the account of Persian Vice-Consul Davud Khan in his "Review of Activities in the Caucasus," which described the horrors and chaos of the Civil War and his efforts to organize the evacuation of Persian citizens from Russian territories, believed that Persian migrants had left the country during this period, leaving only the "Turks" (Azerbaijanis) behind. However, Soviet archival sources provide evidence to the contrary, indicating that the Persian school continued to operate in Vladikavkaz: Davud Khan remained involved in its patronage and even petitioned for the mandatory study of the Persian language.¹ Later A. Kalirad discovered and brought to light archival documents pertaining to the Persian school in Vladikavkaz during the Soviet era [8–11]. It is important to note that unlike pre-revolutionary sources, Soviet sources clearly distinguish between Persians, Turks (Azerbaijanis), and Tatars. Therefore, there is no doubt that the Persian community persisted in the region throughout the entire third of the twentieth century and underwent social transformation alongside other ethnic groups.

The present article aims to explore the Persian community during the tumultuous periods of revolutions, Civil War, and New Economic Policy, with a particular focus on Vladikavkaz as a hub of political activity. During this time, the city became a focal point for various political actors vying for power in Russia, as they sought to establish a foothold in the region. The history of Vladikavkaz serves as a microcosm of the broader political landscape in Russia, marked by a series of power struggles between the "reds" and "whites," each employing terror as a means to consolidate their authority.

In the aftermath of the February Revolution, Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies emerged in the city in March, along with the civil executive committee established by the Vladikavkaz City Duma, all of which expressed support for the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks, who had been previously operating covertly, formed a unified party

1. Svobodny Terek. 1920, No. 4

with the Menshevik Internationalists, known as the RSDLP. The political landscape was characterized by active development, with the establishment of a Military Government, led by the Cossack elite, and the Central Committee of the Union of United Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, led by mountain elite representatives. However, the absence of a single authority was evident, given the numerous contenders for power. By the summer of 1917, councils, including Bolshevik factions, had gained strength in Terek region cities, while trade unions and factory committees were formed, and Regional and District Councils of Peasants' Deputies were established [12, p. 79–91]. The growing influence of the Bolsheviks ultimately led to a split with the Mensheviks and the creation of their own party organization.

The October Revolution in the region was met with significant counter-revolutionary forces coming from Russian regions, as well as with growing interethnic tensions. The situation of dual power necessitated a resolution to this issue, and at a plenary meeting of the Vladikavkaz Council, a resolution was adopted recognizing the Council as the sole government body subordinate to the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR. However, the meeting was disrupted by representatives of the Terek-Dagestan government, who defeated the Vladikavkaz Bolshevik Committee and took control of the Terek region from December 1917 to March 1918. Following the proclamation of the Terek Autonomous Soviet Republic within the RSFSR in March 1918, representatives of the Terek-Dagestan government went to Dagestan [12, p. 90–91].

Vladikavkaz emerged as the center of the Terek Soviet Republic and by the summer of 1918 – as a significant stronghold of the revolution in the North Caucasus. However, one of the most tragic episodes in the city's history occurred on August 6, 1918 when White Guard detachments entered Vladikavkaz. The Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks managed to form a new government, which unleashed a reign of terror resulting in the deaths of over 100 people. Nevertheless, on August 17, the Bolsheviks launched a counteroffensive and successfully expelled the White Guards from the city by the morning of August 18. Vladikavkaz suffered heavy losses due to both “white” and “red” terror. In February 1919, Denikin's troops occupied the city, leading to a new wave of terror. Approximately 17,000 wounded and sick Red Army soldiers and commanders housed in hospitals in Vladikavkaz were executed. This period was marked by robberies, murders, fires, a typhus epidemic, and attempts at mass escape from the city. On January 21, 1920, the Terek regional group of rebel troops and the district revolutionary committee were established in Vladikavkaz, organizing an uprising with the support of rebel detachments and the Red Army. On March 22, Denikin's followers fled the city, and power transitioned to the Revolutionary Committee [12, p. 91].

The Persian community, like other foreign diasporas, faced the challenge of survival and adaptation to changing circumstances. Most Persian subjects were labor migrants engaged in trade, brick production, and various crafts, making them vulnerable to robbery and exploitation under different political regimes. In this context, Persian consul Davud Khan al-Nazareh took steps to protect his compatriots and facilitate their return to Iran, and later – to politically adapt the remaining Persians to the changing political landscape. In 1918, the newspaper “Narodnaya Vlast” reported on the establishment of the “Iranian Democratic Party” in Vladikavkaz, similar to the existing party in Iran. The party consisted of both Persians and “Azerbaijani Tatars” and aimed to safeguard the Persian population

from extortion and robbery.² However, given the challenging political climate of the time, no political force was able to effectively address this issue. Consequently, the party's influence remained insignificant within the broader Russian political landscape.

In March 1920, the Svobodny Terek newspaper published an order from the Revolutionary Council for the Defense of the Vladikavkaz, dated March 24, 1920, which announced the transfer of military power to the Revolutionary Defense Council of Vladikavkaz and the imposition of martial law. The order prohibited from staying on the city streets after 8 pm and forbade indiscriminate shooting. It also stated that arrests, searches, requisitions, and confiscations could only be carried out with orders from the Military Revolutionary Committee or the Defense Council.³ The subsequent issue of the newspaper reported: "Over the past few days, there has been a significant decrease in shooting within the city, with occasional isolated gunshots still heard. The general population is gradually regaining composure, the situation in the city is improving".⁴

The Persian consulate played a significant role in maintaining order in the city by forming a self-defense detachment that protected the Persian population and their property. The detachment was easily recognizable due to their distinctive national Persian uniform.⁵

In an appeal to the city's population, Persian Consul Davud Khan emphasized Persia's neutrality in both World War I and the Civil War, and proposed that any misunderstandings between the local population and Persian subjects be resolved through the mediation of the Persian consulate.⁶

Moreover, on the initiative of Davud Khan, all consuls of foreign powers located in Vladikavkaz established a council to protect the interests of their subjects. The council included Persian, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Serbian consuls. The Persian consul Davud Khan, as the eldest in age, was elected chairman of the council.⁷

On March 21, 1920, Comrade Mordovtsev, the leader of the rebel detachment in the Terek region and Assistant to the Commander-in-Chief, visited the representatives of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Serbia, and Persia "with whom he had a long conversation on issues of the political situation and the attitude of Soviet power towards these states."⁸ Subsequently, on March 29, representatives from the aforementioned states paid a return visit to Comrade Mordovtsev. The Council of Consuls of Persia, Georgia, Armenia, Serbia, and Azerbaijan presented Comrade Mordovtsev with a memorandum, which outlined the rights and privileges of foreign nationals based on international law. These included exemptions from compulsory military service, administrative or public service, forced loans, taxes, and requisitions resulting from war or exceptional circumstances. In the event of unrest or violent incidents, the consuls requested protection for the person and property of foreign nationals under local law. The memorandum also emphasized the right to free and unrestricted travel, with the expectation that local authorities would ensure its security. Furthermore, the consuls requested that searches be conducted in the homes of foreigners and at commercial establishments in the presence of the consul or a designated representative, who would be invited by the local authorities. The text of the memorandum suggests that,

2. Narodnaya Vlast. 1918, No. 33

3. Svobodnyi Terek. 1920, No. 3

4. Svobodnyi Terek. 1920, No. 4

5. Svobodnyi Terek. 1920, No. 3

6. Svobodnyi Terek. 1920, No. 3

7. Svobodnyi Terek. 1920, No. 4

8. Svobodnyi Terek. 1920, No. 7

in addition to adhering to established norms of international law, it was influenced by the bitter experiences of chaos endured during periods of frequent regime changes. Mordovtsev assured the consuls that the Soviet government sought peaceful coexistence with neighboring states and peoples. As such, measures would be taken to ensure that foreign subjects could fully enjoy their rights and privileges as entitled to them.⁹

On November 17, 1920, the Congress of the Peoples of the Terek proclaimed the establishment of the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which maintained communication with the central authorities through its Representative Office at the People's Commissariat for Nationalities of the RSFSR. The primary responsibility of the Representative Office was to oversee the development and implementation of national policies. However, as autonomous national districts gradually seceded from the Mountain Republic, the functions of the Representative Office diminished. Following the reorganization of the Mountain Republic on June 7, 1924, and the subsequent establishment of autonomous regions in accordance with the Resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the existence of the Representative Office became obsolete.

During the NEP period, the national policy of "indigenization" created opportunities for the representation of national minorities in government bodies. In 1924, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee issued circulars regarding the activities of Commissioners responsible for implementing national policy. These Commissioners were tasked with gathering information on the number and living conditions of national minorities, their economic and cultural needs, and collaborating closely with the Department of Nationalities of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. The Commissioners also oversaw the process of establishing grassroots party organizations – party sections composed of national minorities. This work was entrusted to the "Bureau of the National Committee of the District Committee of the RCP (b)" and the party sections. Efforts were made to promote the languages and cultures of local peoples through the publication of educational and fictional literature, newspapers, magazines and paperwork in their languages.

The infrastructure of the diaspora underwent significant changes during this period. The traditional institutions such as consulates, churches, charitable organizations, and national cultural societies were gradually replaced by party sections and national clubs. While the traditional infrastructure emerged through community self-organization with the aim of preserving and strengthening national identity while integrating into the local economy and society, the new structure was established by the Soviet government to counter religious and "bourgeois" national influences and engage national minorities in Soviet development. It was emphasized that the linguistic, cultural, and everyday characteristics of these minorities needed to be taken into account.

An examination of the reports from the "Bureau of the National Minorities of the Vladikavkaz District Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks" and the meeting minutes of the Turkic-Tatar Party Section for the period of 1925-1926, which also included ethnic Persians, reveals the active efforts made by those in charge and a weak response and, at times, even resistance from the Persians themselves towards these activities.

The Bureau of the National People of the Vladikavkaz District Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) issued a demand for the Turkic-Tatar party section to

9. Svobodnyi Terek. 1920, No. 9

conduct an extensive propaganda campaign against the Shiite holiday of *Ashura* (*Shahsey-Wahsey*),¹⁰ which held a significant place in the spiritual culture of the Persians. In response, Gasanov, the secretary of the Turkic-Persian party section, attempted to defend the Persians' right to celebrate their cultural festivities. However, his stance led to severe criticism from the Bureau, accusing him of attending ceremonial events of the Persians and maintaining friendships with businessmen whom he allegedly involved in the section's work. The ideologists of the new government were particularly irritated by elderly men with "red-dyed beards," despite their willingness to financially support the Persian school and community. Gasanov, the secretary of the Turkic-Persian party section, did not endorse the slogan "Persian woman, down with the burqa, it covers the sun of spring!" as it was not relevant to the Persian women in the North Caucasus, who did not wear the burqa. He also opposed anti-religious plays that undermined the Persians' trust in the party section and national club. The authorities' decision to dismiss Gasanov from his position sparked outrage within the Persian community, leading representatives to appeal to the Bureau to retain such a valuable employee. However, Gasanov was removed from office and expelled from the party without the right of reinstatement, which alienated the Persian community from the Bureau and the party section, since Gasanov was a respected leader who had successfully connected the Persians with the new power structures¹¹. The community was further disillusioned by the government's campaign against the cult Shiite days of *Ashura* (*Shahsey-Wahsey*), which the Vladikavkaz Persians had traditionally celebrated. The Persian consul would notify the city government and police chief in advance that prayers would be held in the mosque on these days, followed by a meal, Koran recitation, and discussions about Ali and his sons, retelling the details of their tragic demise. The community would also distribute alms and perform charitable acts.¹²

The Soviet officials believed that by labeling the holiday as bourgeois, the mullah as a swindler and exploiter, and the ritual of self-flagellation as mortally dangerous, they could easily erase *Ashura* from Shiite culture. The agitators claimed that "all these tricks were created by the bourgeoisie to exploit the poor Persians. The upper class and clergy know that this approach will effectively manipulate and exploit the fanatical and uneducated masses."¹³

At a meeting of the Turkic-Tatar party section accompanied by non-party activists on June 27, 1928, the issue of the upcoming *Ashura* days was revisited. The holiday was deemed "absolutely harmful," created by oppressors to cloud the consciousness of the working class of Persians. The resolution included a provision to combat the ritual of self-flagellation. Party members were tasked with actively educating the masses about the harmfulness of the holiday, to distance themselves from backward fanatics, and demanding that they cease performing ritual self-flagellation, which was classified as criminal acts and felonies. It was suggested that law enforcement agencies be involved in taking decisive measures.¹⁴ The campaign against this tradition was conducted as part of an anti-religious policy, but officials failed to recognize that the Persians were a tight-knit ethno-confessional community with deeply intertwined religious and national traditions. As a result, the Persians perceived the

10. During the first 10 days of the holy month of Muharram, Shiites have long mourned the martyrdom of Hussein, observing strict fasting and mourning, which is accompanied by ritual actions – re-enactments of episodes of the Battle of Karbala, where he died, and processions through the streets with black banners.

11. Vlast Truda. 1927, 236 (941).

12. Terskie Vedomosti. 1885, 18.

13. Vlast Truda. 1927, 150 (855)

14. Minutes of the meeting of the Turkic party section together with non-party activists dated June 27, 1928 // Central State Archive of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania (hereinafter CSA RNO-A). F. 2. Inv. 1. File 40. L. 76.

campaign as an attack on their national identity, rather than an attempt to modernize their society. By targeting their traditions, Soviet officials only further alienated the Persians and hindered their efforts to integrate them into the new social order.

The Persians affiliated with the Turkic-Tatar national party section showed little interest in attending meetings, even after local newspapers began publishing announcements about the meetings at the party section's request. Despite the transfer of lists of absentees to the Bureau, the Persian party members remained inactive.¹⁵ In 1926, the party section raised the issue of nominating candidates from Persians and Tatars for the City Council elections, but there were doubts about their willingness to attend council meetings, as recorded in the minutes.¹⁶

An examination of the party section's protocols reveals numerous issues in its operations, extending beyond material concerns. The members themselves acknowledged that "it was challenging to unite three nationalities to work together." Some advocated for division along national lines, while others suggested engaging workers and students within a unified section, involving not only party members but also the broader community in its efforts.

From the surviving "Case of the Work of the Persian School," it appears that Persians, Turkic, and Azerbaijani Tatars studied there. The controversial issue of the school's location is also being clarified. In response to a request dated January 13, 1925, regarding the premises occupied by the Persian School on the corner of Moskovskaya and Augustovskiy Sobytiy streets, the head of the Vladikavkaz district department of public education reported that "the house is occupied by a Persian school of the 1st level, administered by the department, and has been located in this house since October 18, 1922. It is privately known that in pre-war times this house was also occupied by the city school."¹⁷ At the school, students studied Russian and Turkic languages, arithmetic in their native language, natural history, and social studies. Physical education and drawing were compulsory subjects for all groups. In total, there were three national groups at the school, with a total of 69 students. The head of the school, B.A. Kocharlinsky, who had previously headed the Persian new method school "Navruz" and also taught Turkic language and arithmetic.¹⁸

The Persian community traditionally addressed issues related to their school during Soviet times. At a general meeting of Persians in 1924, they held elections for a community representative to the school council (M. Guseyn Akhund-Zade was elected) as well as assistance committee elections (Mammad Yakubov, Rzu Khasanov, Karim Kambarov, Kazim Kuliev, M. Ismail Rustamov, and Musa Aliyev were elected). The main agenda item was a resolution to introduce the "Farsi language" and make its teaching compulsory, as well as increase the number of lessons.¹⁹ The Assistance Committee took on the task of providing the school with textbooks and literature in their native language.

The school was under close scrutiny from the authorities. In 1925, it was included in the city of Vladikavkaz's budget, and by the end of 1927, the city council reported that the Persian school had undergone renovations, had received additional school equipment and schoolbooks, and had improved its teaching staff.²⁰ Due to the poor performance of students,

15. Minutes of meetings of the bureau of party sections of the ethnic minorities that existed under the Vladikavkaz Okrug Committee – Georgian, Armenian and Turkic-Tatar // CSA RNO-A. F. 2. Inv. 1. File 27. L. 24.

16. Ibid.

17. Case of the Work of the Persian School // CSA RNO-A. F. 49. Inv. 1. File 303. L. 28.

18. Ibid. L. 5.

19. Ibid. L. 21.

20. Vlast Truda. 1927, 229 (934)

the city council requested that the department of public education increase the number of lessons in Russian and native languages in these schools.²¹ To support the Persian school and strengthen party influence, it was decided to establish a representative office from the section bureau.²²

The new authorities placed significant emphasis on the inclusion of women in the new societal framework. The school was recognized as the primary platform for political and educational activities among women, and it achieved notable success in this regard. However, the situation was more complex for Muslim women. In September 1924, M. Abukhova, the head of the women's department of the Regional Communist Party of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Vladgubernatorial Organization, approached GORONO with a request to establish a special school for Persian girls. The rationale behind this request was that, according to Sharia law, these girls were unable to study alongside boys, making it challenging for the women's department to carry out educational work with them. The special school held great promise and hopes were high for its success.²³

The establishment of cutting and sewing schools for "ethnic women" can be regarded as successful "boiling points" of propaganda work. Women's needlework was an integral part of traditional culture, and the ability to sew was considered a significant advantage for a woman. Therefore, such schools were more likely to attract them. The party section believed that it should actively participate in the cultural and political education of "ethnic women," persuading them that socialism offered more benefits than Sharia law, protecting them from polygamy, early marriage, and dowry. However, unlike the Armenian, Georgian, and Tatar schools, the Persian school of cutting and sewing faced challenges in recruiting students. Members of the party discussed the issues facing the Persian school of cutting and sewing at almost every section meeting. They attributed the school's lack of progress to financial difficulties and the need for tuition payments. According to the school's 1926 report, the Bureau of the Turkic-Tatar Party Section considered the challenges faced by Persian girls, including inadequate equipment, limited class time (only three classes per week), a language barrier, and a lack of attention to the girls' needs. To address these issues, the school decided to recognize the weaknesses in their program, purchase new sewing machines, replace the instructor, and secure funding. They also decided to charge wealthy Persian women 3 rubles each and offer free classes to girls from poor families. Additionally, they proposed training organizers of women's educational work, delegating representatives of "ethnic women" to training courses for organizers, and involving party sections in this work by establishing contact with the Department of Women Workers of the City Council.²⁴

A year later, the situation remained unchanged and became a topic of interest in the local press. "For approximately a year, a school of cutting and sewing has been operating at the Nationals Club. There are 35 girls enrolled in the program. The tuition fee is minimal, barely sufficient to cover the instructor's salary. The school's equipment consists of a single sewing machine, a few tables, and some benches. This meager provision leads to students standing in line for the lone machine, hindering their work and discouraging them from participating. However, the school serves as a foundation for engaging with 'ethnic women.' It undertakes

21. Vlast Truda. 1927, 185 (890)

22. Minutes of the meeting of the Turkic party section together with non-party activists dated June 27, 1928 // CSA RNO-A. F. 2. Inv. 1. File 40. L. 74.

23. Petition for the opening of a special school for Persian girls // CSA RNO-A. F.R. 49. Inv. 1. File 229. L. 51.

24. Minutes of meetings of the bureau of party sections of the ethnic minorities that existed under the Vladikavkaz Okrug Committee – Georgian, Armenian and Turkic-Tatar // CSA RNO-A. F. 2. Inv. 1. File 27. L. 44–46.

political, cultural, and educational activities aimed at ethnic women. The school board has long been considering the purchase of a second machine. The women's commission came to the school's aid, collaborating with the National Club's board, mobilizing prominent artistic efforts, and organizing a charitable event at the Club. The event raised 132 rubles in profit, which was earmarked for buying a second machine."²⁵ Another correspondent observed that "it was the first time when the Persian women came in chaddars. Their parents escorted them to the school's entrance and waited until classes were over. Later, many girls removed their chaddars."²⁶

The situation in the Persian school of cutting and sewing was not improving, resulting in low attendance rates among Persian women. In response, the Tatar party section proposed merging the school with a Tatar school in the Tatar region, along with its property and students. The proposal was accepted with the hope that the merger would revitalize the school's activities.²⁷

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution, a gathering of working women resolved to establish a production and artistic carpet workshop to support "ethnic women." Carpet weaving had long been a traditional occupation for women in Persia, and prior to the revolution, a Persian carpet workshop operated in Vladikavkaz, where only women were employed in crafting carpets.²⁸

The National Clubs played a significant role in Soviet national policy. At a meeting of the Turkic-Tatar party section in January 1926, the head of the club, Zahranbekov, presented his annual report, but the club's work was deemed inadequate. The speakers suggested revitalizing the club by establishing circles, securing funding, and restocking the library. They also noted that the club's financial situation was challenging. Zahranbekov attributed the lack of mass propaganda efforts to Persian traditions that discouraged women from visiting public places. However, the club's efforts in preparing educational programs for the Persian community were commended. It was decided to order literature in both Tatar and Persian languages [1, p. 175].

However, the "golden time" of ethnocultural development for national minorities was coming to an end. The actualization of ethnically differentiating characteristics of the region's peoples did not align with the proclaimed task of bringing nations together and creating a single community – the Soviets. In the early 1930s, the policy of "indigenization" began to wind down during the campaign against "bourgeois nationalism." A decree distributed by the Central Committee and local party bodies on February 21, 1930, aimed to strengthen the service of nationalities along the Soviet line. The Presidium of the Council of Nationalities, the Organizational Department of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, national departments under the Central Election Commissions, regional and district executive committees, and other national structures were tasked with intensifying work with ethnic minorities. First, national party sections were abolished, and eventually, all other national structures were dismantled, transferring their employees to Soviet authorities [13, p. 19–20]. While the policy of "indigenization" offered new forms of language and culture development for the Persians, the ignorance of officials became the main reason for the weak response to attempts to involve them in Soviet society.

25. Vlast Truda. 1927, 228 (933).

26. Vlast Truda. 1927, 185 (890).

27. Minutes of meetings of the bureau of party sections of the ethnic minorities that existed under the Vladikavkaz Okrug Committee – Georgian, Armenian and Turkic-Tatar // CSA RNO-A. F. 2. Inv. 1. File 27. L. 101.

28. Vlast Truda. 1927, 191 (896).

On April 8, 1929, by decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the North Ossetian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, on the basis of the resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR "On Religious Associations," the Shiite Mosque in Vladikavkaz was closed. The City Council supported this decision, justifying it by the fact that the Shiite community had split and religious ceremonies had not been held in the mosque for several years.²⁹ The Persians indeed had to share the mosque with other ethnic Shiites – Russian-subject Turks (Azerbaijanis), conflicts arose between them, the regional administration always supported its subjects, so the mosque did not become a place of attraction for the Persian community.

The abandonment of the NEP also had adverse effects on the Persian community. Following the devastation and pogroms of the Civil War, the NEP provided an opportunity for the Persians to rebuild their trade and entrepreneurial activities. Consequently, the abandonment of the NEP undermined the foundations of the Persian community's livelihood.

The changing foreign policy relations between Persia and the USSR served as a significant destabilizing factor. The NEP had strengthened the trade and economic aspects of foreign policy, offering promising avenues for development. However, with the curtailment of the NEP, the prospects of normalizing trade and economic relations were delayed. In 1927, representatives of the Persian colony greeted the announcement of the signing of the Soviet-Persian agreement with great enthusiasm and hope that existing ambiguities and misunderstandings would be resolved.³⁰ Unfortunately, these hopes proved to be in vain as the foreign policy course of the USSR began to shift. By the early 1930s, the country ceased issuing residence permits to foreigners without national passports. In 1937, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR issued a decree on the deportation of Persians back to their homeland.

Thus, the Persians, while maintaining political neutrality, developed their own forms of adaptation to the new political regime: the creation of the Iranian Democratic Party, a self-defense unit at the Persian Consulate in order to protect against pogroms and robberies, the creation by the Persian consul of a council to protect the interests of foreign citizens, negotiations with representatives of the new authorities. During the period of the "indigenization" policy, the Persians entered Soviet structures: the party section, the national club, and had a school teaching Farsi, which gave hope for preserving their identity. However, the gross interference of officials in the traditional culture of the Persians during the anti-religious campaign and the fight against the "remnants" of the past became the cause of ethnocultural discomfort and a weak response to the attempts of the Soviet government to involve them in Soviet society. The curtailment of the new economic policy and the undermining of the foundations of ethnic entrepreneurship of the Persians, the rejection of the policy of "indigenization," the liquidation of the consulate as the main consolidating center of the community led to the destruction of the Persian community, and the change in the USSR's foreign policy towards Iran led to the deportation of the Persians remaining in the region to their homeland.

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29. From minutes No. 20 of the meeting of the Presidium of the City Council // CSA RNO-A. F. 629. Inv. 2. File 32. L. 45.
30. Vlast Truda. 1927, 228 (933)

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