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The Stalinist Self

The Case of Ioseb Jughashvili (1898–1907)

ERIK VAN REE

This article explores the sense of self exhibited by Ioseb (“Soso”) Jughashvili, Stalin *in statu nascendi*, during the 1898–1907 period, when he served the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP) as an activist mainly based in Tiflis. Taken in its most abstract form, the self is part of the human condition. People of all cultures and times are aware of their separate existence. Our minds do not telepathically merge with that of our neighbors. On a more concrete level, though, senses of the self vary widely from one cultural context to another.¹ The present article explores the young Stalin’s self-identification in its sociological aspect, by focusing on the question of the social classes with which he identified. I argue that he not only obviously identified himself as an *intelligent* but also throughout the period under discussion here continued to assign the leading role in the party committees to the *intelligenty*. In acting as a strong defender of the intelligentsia section of the party, Jughashvili was inspired by a particular form of Enlightenment discourse that centered on the primacy of knowledge, science, and consciousness and remained characteristic of him even as Soviet dictator.

My research in Moscow was made possible through a grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). I would like to thank Alfred Rieber and Ronald Suny for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this article.

¹ On the variety of the self, see Peter Burke, “Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes,” in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), 28; Roy Porter, “Introduction,” in his *Rewriting the Self*, 1–4; Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 59; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Marcel Mauss, “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person, the Notion of Self,” in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–25.

At the danger of simplifying often subtle analyses, two schools on this question can be distinguished. On the one hand, Lev Davidovich Trotskii treats the young Stalin as a “‘committeeman’ *par excellence*,” disinclined to promote workers to leading positions.² Isaac Deutscher’s Jughashvili belonged to the “semi-nomad fringe of *déclassés*” of the intelligentsia. Despite the sense of closeness to the workers that he brought along from his humble background, he nurtured an attitude of “sceptical distrust” toward them.³ Ronald Suny’s treatment of Soso as a “consistent defender of the party’s prerogatives over those of the labour organisations” can be placed in this tradition.⁴ On the other hand, a revisionist chord has been struck recently. Robert Himmer argues that Soso took great pride in his own lower-class origins, claimed a proletarian status for himself, and hoped to see the intelligentsia segment of the party replaced by workers.⁵ Alfred Rieber’s analysis of Soso’s synthetic Georgian–Russian identity included a “presentation of self as a proletarian.” Jughashvili’s claim to be a proletarian would mainly be evinced by his identification with “the tendency of ‘proletarian steadfastness’ (Bolshevik) as opposed to the tendency of ‘the intelligentsia to vacillate’ (Menshevism).”⁶

Himmer’s and Rieber’s suggestion that Jughashvili associated himself with the allegedly proletarian values to the point of creating a proletarian self-presentation seems out of proportion. Whatever he may have written about the proletarian virtues, I know of no occasion that Soso was claiming a proletarian status for *himself*.⁷ As a former student of the Tiflis Seminary, he was perceived by his comrades as an *intelligent*, and so he was invariably described in police informers’ reports.

² Leon Trotski, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1947), 61–62.

³ Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 24–26.

⁴ Ronald G. Suny, “A Journeyman for the Revolution: Stalin and the Labour Movement in Baku, June 1907–May 1908,” *Soviet Studies* 23, 3 (1972): 373–94, esp. 374, 380–82. See also Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography* (Basingstoke, UK: MacMillan, 2004), 48–49.

⁵ Robert Himmer, “First Impressions Matter: Stalin’s Brief Initial Encounter with Lenin, Tammerfors 1905,” *Revolutionary Russia* 14, 2 (2001): 73–84; Himmer, “On the Origin and Significance of the Name ‘Stalin,’” *Russian Review* 45, 3 (1986): 269–86.

⁶ Alfred J. Rieber, “Stalin, Man of the Borderlands,” *American Historical Review* 106, 5 (2001): 1653, 1669–70; Rieber, “Stalin as Georgian: The Formative Years,” in *Stalin: A New History*, ed. Sarah Davies and James Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18–44.

⁷ I find it unconvincing to read Stalin’s June 1926 speech, containing the proud admission that he received his revolutionary education from experienced workers, as constructing a “proletarian biography.” See Rieber, “Stalin, Man of the Borderlands,” 1673; and I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 8: 1926, *ianvar’–noiabr’* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’svo politicheskoi literatury, 1948), 174–75 (hereafter *Sochineniia*).

The work of social historians confirms that it would be unlikely for Jughashvili to have claimed a proletarian status for himself. Revolutionary intellectuals served as a cultural “role model” for workers in the social-democratic movement.⁸ Reginald Zelnik traces this pattern back to the 1870s, when the idea arose that a worker “might be shaped by *intelligently* into a new kind of person, resembling themselves ... a worker-*intelligent*.” Fluid “crossover identities” were not uncommon in the movement, but students tended only to flirt with the externalities of proletarian life.⁹ Strikingly, the many workers who were dissatisfied with intelligentsia dominance of the RSDWP believed they could manage on their own only when they felt they had achieved an intelligentsia status of their own. An *intelligent* presenting himself as a worker would have struck others as odd.

His actions and writings suggest that Jughashvili identified himself with an existing discourse in which members of the intelligentsia were seen as the agents of Enlightenment and teachers of socialist consciousness. In the Russian revolutionary tradition, “intelligentsia” referred not strictly to the educated class but to those committed to expedite history’s march from darkness to light through the spread of knowledge as a force of emancipation.¹⁰ It is a commonplace that modernizing late imperial Russia was undergoing rapid socio-economic and cultural changes that were drastically transforming the lives of its inhabitants and leading to complex identity transformations. Compared to the peasantry standing for the dark past, industrial workers represented the light of modernity. In a further progression, the intelligentsia embodied consciousness and had the duty to enlighten the workers in order to enable them to carry out their task of demolishing the existing order. This particular messianic Enlightenment discourse was influential among the

⁸ S. A. Smith, “Workers, the Intelligentsia, and Social Democracy in St. Petersburg, 1895–1917,” in *Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections*, ed. Reginald E. Zelnik (Berkeley: International and Area Studies, University of California, 1999), 186–205. See also Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China: A Comparative History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 71–79—reviewed in this issue of *Kritika*.

⁹ Reginald E. Zelnik, “Workers and Intelligentsia in the 1870s: The Politics of Sociability,” in his *Workers and Intelligentsia*, 19, 33–45. See also Zelnik, “Russian Bebel: An Introduction to the Memoirs of the Russian Workers Semen Kanatchikov and Matvei Fisher, 2,” *Russian Review* 35, 4 (1976): 417–47; Zelnik, ed., *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semën Ivanovich Kanatchikov* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986); Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg, eds., *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

¹⁰ For this definition of “intelligentsia” in the Russian empire, see Mark D. Steinberg, *The Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910–1925* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 22, 35.

social-democratic intelligentsia and has been subject to extensive scholarly analysis.¹¹

As we will see, the young Soso most likely became acquainted with this kind of thinking through his contacts with the Georgian patriotic movement of Ilia Chavchavadze. For the Social Democrat Jughashvili it was self-evident that it was not specifically the intelligentsia but the party as a collective that served as the force of enlightenment and brought socialist consciousness to the workers. In his view, however, within the ranks of the party the intelligentsia served as the center of awareness. He furthermore tended to see workers on the party committees as a security risk, which was a common enough position for RSDWP *intelligent*y cadres to take.¹²

All this, however, is far from unproblematic. Himmer and Rieber are on the mark in claiming that, paradoxically, the *intelligent* Jughashvili suspected the *intelligent*y, as a group, of ingrained character flaws, and that he went out of his way to show his appreciation of what he saw as the proletarian virtues of courage and steadfastness. For Marxists the intelligentsia counted as bourgeois, with only a small, revolutionary minority deserting to the workers' party. As a social stratum, therefore, the *intelligent*y remained marked by bourgeois psychology.

The whole Bolshevik discourse was marked by this ambivalence. The Bolsheviks inherited the messianic tradition of the Russian intelligentsia, but as Marxists they wholeheartedly acknowledged the proletariat as the social avant garde. Vladimir Il'ich Lenin did impose on the revolutionary intelligentsia the task of infusing the workers with revolutionary consciousness. But more fundamentally for him, this infusing was the task of the collective of social-democratic party cadres—whatever their class background. Lenin set great store by adding new proletarian leaders, “Russian Bebels,” to the

¹¹ Leopold H. Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955); Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000). See also Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2, 16ff.; Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 55–61, 269; and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), sect. 1.

¹² See Allan K. Wildman, *The Making of a Workers' Revolution: Russian Social Democracy, 1891–1903* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 32, chap. 4. See also John L. H. Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy in Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 39, 48, 170; and Tim McDaniel, *Autocracy, Capitalism, and Revolution in Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 210.

committees.¹³ The Bolshevik Third Party Congress in April–May 1905 discussed Menshevik critiques of the Bolshevik intelligentsia bias. Many local Bolshevik *komitetchiki* present at the congress believed there were simply not enough able workers with a developed social-democratic consciousness to be promoted to leadership positions. Lenin and other *literatory*, however, made a strong case for adding new proletarians to the committees.¹⁴

In the Georgian context, Jughashvili's firm defense of the intelligentsia's interest in the party was more remarkable. The Georgian social-democratic movement was significantly pervaded by an ethos of workers' self-management. In his journal *kvali* [The Furrow], the foremost social-democratic leader Noe Zhordania subjected the conception of the intelligentsia as a tribune of the people to severe criticism. He associated the image of the *intelligent* as enlightener and patron of the workers with unhealthy Russian revolutionary traditions, and from 1903 onward decried the Bolsheviks as proponents of intelligentsia leadership in the party. According to Stephen Jones, the Georgian revolutionary workers and *intelligenty* in their majority shared Zhordania's approach that "the intelligentsia should take a back seat." Anti-intelligentsia emotions were a major factor enabling the Georgian Mensheviks in 1905 to convince the social-democratic workers to turn against the Bolsheviks.¹⁵

¹³ For scholarly views on the Leninist discourse on workers and intelligentsia, see Haimson, *The Russian Marxists*, 193–95; Keep, *The Rise of Social-Democracy*, 89–90, 148, 210–11; Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: The Workers' Movement and the Formation of Bolshevism and Menshevism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), chaps. 3, 4, appendix 9; Robert Mayer, "Marx, Lenin, and the Corruption of the Working Class," *Political Studies* 41, 4 (1993): 636–49; Henry Reichman, "On Kanatchikov's Bolshevism: Workers and *Intelligenty* in Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*" *Russian History/Histoire russe* 23, 1–4 (1996): 27–45; Halfin, *From Darkness into Light*; and Lars T. Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered: "What Is to Be Done?" in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 447–69, 529–44. On the concept of "Russian Bebels," see Zelnik's "Russian Bebels" and *A Radical Worker*.

¹⁴ See *Tretii s'ezd RSDRP: Aprel'–mai 1905 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959), 326–36; Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution*, chap. 5; and Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered.*, 540–43.

¹⁵ Stephen Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 63–64, 69, 95–96, 124. Jones's analysis of the proletarian ethos of the Georgian social-democratic movement and the *intelligenty* being forced to play second fiddle follows Zhordania and his comrade Razhden Arsenidze. See N. N. Zhordania, "Staline" (Hoover Institution Archives [HIA], Collection Boris Nicolaevsky ([Nic.], box 144, folder 3, pp. 3, 5); Zhordaniia at the Fourth Party Congress in 1906—*Chetvertyi (ob'edinitel'nyi) s'ezd RSDRP: Aprel' (aprel'–mai) 1906 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959), 339; Noi Zhordaniia, *Moia zhizn'* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1968), 34; and interviews with Arsenidze 24 July 1961 (HIA, Nic., box 667, folders 4–5, pp. 1–2, 7–8) and 25 July 1961 (101).

In terms of his self-interest, then, Jughashvili had a powerful motive to adapt to the prevailing workerist atmosphere of Georgian social democracy. Moreover, Lenin's advocacy of proletarianization of the committees would have offered him an excellent legitimation for a more workerist approach. But strikingly, not unlike many other local *komitetchiki* skeptical about Lenin's proposals, he continued to defend the position of the intelligentsia as the party's center of socialist awareness, and he was prepared to accept increasing isolation in the organization as a price to be paid: by early 1906, he had only a small number of dedicated followers left. This suggests that Jughashvili's identification with the party intelligentsia was most likely not inspired by tactical motives but by a powerful and authentic vision of its leading role in the organization.

This leaves us with the question of how the young Stalin handled the ambiguities inherent in his approach to class relations in the party on a discursive level. I propose that—though as a Marxist he would never have formulated this in so many words—Stalin acted on the assumption that emancipatory knowledge and heroic strength of character were two driving forces of history. Reflecting Enlightenment and Romantic strains in the traditions of the revolutionary intelligentsia, knowledge and character complemented each other as the rational and emotional sides of one revolutionary process.¹⁶ But for Jughashvili the Enlightenment component carried the most weight. In his 1905–7 writings about the relations between workers and intelligentsia, the themes of scientific socialism, socialist consciousness, and knowledge as the crucial strategic assets of the party figured even more prominently than the question of revolutionary dedication. Whereas strength of character provides consciousness with the necessary muscle, it is consciousness, as the force of orientation, that enlightens and leads the way.

With this conceptualization of the general dilemma, the choices Soso made fall into place. Whereas he associated revolutionary consciousness primarily with the intelligentsia, he saw strength of character as a mainly proletarian virtue. But given that liberating knowledge counted even more for the party than steadfastness, Soso was on balance bound to ascribe the leading role to the party intelligentsia. Despite their serious character flaws, they represented what counted most: knowledge.¹⁷

¹⁶ Enlightenment and Romantic themes in Bolshevism are discussed in David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-War Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Anna Krylova argues that the energetic proletarian character, "class instinct," mattered a great deal to Lenin in "Beyond the Spontaneity–Consciousness Paradigm: 'Class Instinct' as a Promising Category of Historical Analysis," *Slavic Review* 62, 1 (2003): 1–23. Zelnik agrees but counters that rational consciousness remained more important for Lenin than strength

In this article I present a portrait of the young Stalin in his so-called Tiflis period in light of the questions posed here. The article also sheds new light on some important events in Stalin's career, especially the circumstances surrounding his departure for Batumi in late 1901; on the question of which party committees he served on and when; and on the prehistory of his notorious group of expropriators. As for my sources, there is the considerable problem that the papers of the Transcaucasian RSDWP of the years in question are most likely lost.¹⁸ Consequently, published materials of the period, as well as memoir literature, acquire added importance. Some of the relevant memoirs were published in the USSR during the Stalin years, and others were preserved unpublished in Soviet archives. These must be treated with great care. But they can be used critically, in combination with Bolshevik and Menshevik memoirs written outside Stalin's grasp. Memoirs published in the USSR during the 1920s tend to be more reliable than those of later days, although these, too, must be treated with care. Nestan Charkviani and Simon Sebag Montefiore kindly provided me with memoir documents translated from Georgian.¹⁹ In addition to memoir literature found in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) and materials from the Hoover Institution Archives (HIA), tsarist police informers' reports in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) represent a significant source.

A Tiflis Propagandist Runs Aground in Batumi

One might assume that a man like Stalin, from a humble background, would have learned to appreciate the lower classes and would have continued to nurture instinctive sympathies for them later in life. That assumption works up to a point for our hero, in that he joined a social-democratic workers' party. Youthful experiences, however, most likely triggered strong reservations *vis-à-vis* the working class. Soso's personal background strikingly reflects the socio-economic and demographic developments that the Russian Empire was going through at the turn of the century. His parents were born serfs. His father became a cobbler and later a factory worker. The son made the second step on the ladder of enlightenment from worker to intelligentsia: in 1894, he entered the Tiflis Seminary. But that did not go smoothly. Soso's father did

of character ("Worry about Workers: Concerns of the Russian Intelligentsia from the 1870s to *What Is to Be Done?*" in *Extending the Borders of Russian History: Essays in Honour of Alfred J. Rieber*, ed. Marsha Siefert [Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003], 205–27).

¹⁸ Aleksandr Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina: Tainy revoliutsionnogo podpol'ia* (St. Petersburg: Neva; Moscow: Olma-Press, 2003), 62. Stephen Jones, author of the standard work on the history of Georgian social democracy (*Socialism in Georgian Colors*) was unable to find the social-democratic archives anywhere (personal communication, 23 August 2006).

¹⁹ I have marked such documents as ChM.

not find it necessary for his son to receive further education and wanted him to become a worker like himself. Supported by his mother, the boy had to fight hard to be allowed to go to the seminary.²⁰ As we will see, over the years Jughashvili continued to express irritation with workers for their supposed claim not to be in need of knowledge. It seems significant that he had personally had to deal with such sentiments expressed by his own father. It seems, furthermore, not unreasonable to assume that for Ioseb to identify himself as a worker later in life would have represented the negation of a painfully gained personal triumph.

Priests are enlighteners by profession, and in studying for the priesthood Ioseb became acquainted with the concept of spreading wholesome teachings for the benefit of humanity. The spirit of proselytizing would have further taken hold of him when at the seminary he entered illegal student circles. It seems that he took his new, hard-won status seriously and consciously set out to become a real *intelligent*. His first youthful publications appeared in the journal *Iveria*, whose editor, the great Georgian patriotic writer Ilia Chavchavadze, considered popular education by a literary elite a main lever for bringing progress to the country. Chavchavadze, who was strongly influenced by the Russian radical enlighteners Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii and Nikolai Aleksandrovich Dobroliubov, saw it as the Georgian intelligentsia's duty to spread culture among the common people. He was an important force in the Society for the Spread of Literacy among Georgians, founded in 1879. Among other enlightening efforts, the society published Georgian literature, supported libraries and reading rooms, ran evening courses, and trained teachers.²¹

Soso's 1895 poems, published in *Iveria*, suggest that the young seminarian sympathized with Chavchavadze's educational approach to politics. The poems are important in that they provide insight into Stalin's sense of identity and help us understand the position he later took as a Social Democrat. They strikingly confirm his self-understanding as an agent of enlightenment. The main metaphor running through them is that of the light dispersing the darkness. The first poem sings of the arrival of the "morning" and ends by advising the Georgians to study, as the way to bring joy to their motherland. In the second one the poet stretches out his arms to the moon, "spreader of light upon the earth" that hopefully will "scatter the mist of the clouds." We meet a lute-playing prophet spreading melodies "like a beam of sunlight,"

²⁰ Service, *Stalin*, 23.

²¹ J. W. R. Parsons, "The Emergence and Development of the National Question in Georgia, 1801–1921" (Ph.D. diss., University of Glasgow, 1987), 248, 268–69; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (London: Tauris, 1989), 127.

and expressing “truth itself,” with a voice that “enlightened many a man’s mind which had been cast into uttermost darkness.” Significantly we also find here the fear that the common people would not be responsive to the enlightening knowledge on offer: “the mob set before the outcast a vessel filled with poison” and made him drink it. “We do not want your truth, nor these heavenly tunes of yours!”²²

Soso’s joining the social-democratic movement did not represent a break in his self-image as a spreader of the enlightening idea. He became a “propagandist”—a teacher in workers’ circles. Zhordania remembers him in late 1898 presenting himself at the *kvali* editorial office, saying, “I have decided to quit the seminary to propagate your ideas among the workers.”²³ Soso managed to arrange a railway workers’ circle for himself.²⁴ The social-democratic organization was torn by a struggle between moderates headed by Zhordania and Silibistro Jibladze, and radicals loosely grouped around Lado Ketskhoveli.²⁵ The latter was mainly followed by young *intelligently*-propagandists.²⁶ The *kvali* leaders decried Soso and other young comrades as “anarchists.”²⁷

Zhordania remembers that Soso “created his own group and began a personal campaign against Jibladze.”²⁸ To my knowledge, Montefiore is the first to have mentioned Jughashvili’s “little court among the radical boys expelled from the Seminary.”²⁹ The 1935 memoirs of G. Elisabedashvili, a friend of Soso’s youth, discuss the history of this group of young student-propagandists. At Soso’s initiative, in 1900 and 1901 a group of socialist students at the Tiflis Seminary expanded their activities to other schools and colleges. “It was Soso’s idea to affiliate youth with the social-democratic organization.” They began to pay membership dues to the Tiflis Committee. When Elisabedashvili left

²² For the poems, see Donald Rayfield, “Stalin as Poet,” *Poetry and Nation Review*, no. 41 (1984): 44–47.

²³ Zhordania, “Staline,” 1–2. See also N. Vakar, “Stalin: Po vospominaniim N. N. Zhordaniia,” *Poslednie novosti*, 16 December 1936.

²⁴ *Sochineniia*, 8: 173–74. See also Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 130–31.

²⁵ For the nature of the conflict, see Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 71–75, 103; Service, *Stalin*, 48.

²⁶ Zhordaniia, *Moia zhizn’*, 25–26, 28–29; Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 161.

²⁷ From the memoirs of Soso’s comrade Artem Gio, published in *Zaria vostoka*, 13 January 1926. Quoted from Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 558, op. 4, d. 651, ll. 30–31. Most historians assume that Soso was on Ketskhoveli’s side. See Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 161; Service, *Stalin*, 47–50; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 71; Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007), 40, 66; and Sevastii Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 1 (Tiflis: Izdatel’stvo Glavpolitprosveta, 1925), 32, 63 n.

²⁸ Vakar, “Stalin”; Zhordania, “Staline,” 1–3.

²⁹ Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, 66.

the seminary in early 1902, they organized the “group of propagandists that later played an important role in the revolutionary movement.” Among the nine members was S. A. Ter-Petrosian, the later legendary “Kamo.” Archil Dolidze was probably the leading figure. Soso, who now worked in Batumi, kept in regular contact and continued to direct the group.³⁰

Soso became a vocal defender of the intelligentsia interest in the party. Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, his identification with the party intelligentsia initially did not isolate him inside the organization. According to Zhordania and Grigorii Uratadze, Jughashvili moved to Batumi in late November 1901 after a party court expelled him from the Tiflis organization for intriguing against the party leaders.³¹ We know that, indeed, the label of anarchist made it “extremely difficult [for Soso] to work, and he prepared to move on to Batum.”³² However, the trial-and-expulsion story is almost certainly a myth. Soso’s status in the underground organization remained good. In the autumn of 1901, he ran what was probably the largest railroad workers’ circle in Tiflis.³³

In 1900 and 1901, the intelligentsia gained the upper hand in the Tiflis Committee through co-optation. According to the Menshevik S. T. Arkomed, this resulted in a “serious clash between the conscious workers and a ‘band’ of social-democratic *intelligenty*” in October–November 1901.³⁴ On 11 November, 25 Tiflis Social Democrats met to elect a new committee.³⁵ An informer’s report mentions a total of five intellectuals in attendance: Vaso Tsabadze, the two Jugheli brothers, Arkomed, and Jughashvili.³⁶ Severian Jugheli reported that the workers demanded rejection of the “old way of forming the committee” in favor of “elections in the organization” and called for acknowledgment once and for all of the “principle of workers’ participation in the committee.” According to Arkomed, the matter of elections elicited no

³⁰ G. Elisabedashvili (I. V. Stalin State House Gori–Museum Fund [SSHG] f. 3, op. 1, d. 1955/146, ll. 1–11, 20–31 [ChM]). See also Vl. Kaminskii and Iv. Vereshchagin, “Detstvo i iunost’ vozhdia: Dokumenty, zapisi, rasskazy,” *Molodaia gvardiia*, no. 12 (1939): 71–72. On Soso and Elisabedashvili, see also Rieber, “Stalin as Georgian,” 34–35.

³¹ Vakar, “Stalin”; Zhordania, “Staline,” 3–4; Grigorii Uratadze, *Vospominaniia gruzinskogo sotsial-demokrata* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution for War, Revolution, and Peace, 1968), 67.

³² Artem Gio’s memoirs (RGASPI f. 558, op. 4, d. 651, l. 33).

³³ Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 172–73.

³⁴ S. T. Arkomed, *Rabochee dvizhenie i sotsial-demokratiia na Kavkaze*, 1 (Geneva: Chaulmontet, 1910), 53–54. See also Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 56–61.

³⁵ Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 62.

³⁶ On 5 July 1902, see Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 102, op. 199, d. 175, ll. 92–93. See also Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 173; and the police report of 30 November 1901 (GARF f. 102, op. 226, d. 5.52.B, l. 4).

debate, but “one young, intellectual comrade, indiscriminately ‘energetical’ in all things” pleaded against workers joining the committee, as incompatible with the rules of *konspiratsiia* (secrecy). He remarked: “The workers are being flattered here; let me ask you, are there among you even one or two workers fit for the committee? Tell me truthfully, with your hand on your heart.” The meeting rejected these arguments, and Arkomed adds that the young man soon left for Batumi, whence news was received about his “hostile and disorganizational agitation against the Tiflis organization.”³⁷

The self-assured defender of the intelligentsia must have been Jughashvili, in the most extreme position on the worker–intelligentsia question he was ever to take. But rather than being a lone wolf, he appears to have represented an influential section of party opinion.³⁸ The Bolshevik historian Sevastii Talakvadze (according to whose account Jughashvili’s objections were directed against the electoral principle) informs us that Tšabadze shared his position.³⁹ The latter was one of the leaders of the radical party wing.⁴⁰ An informers’ report has it that, in addition to two workers, four *intelligently* were elected to the new committee: Tšabadze (chairman), one of the Jugheli brothers, Arkomed, and Jughashvili.⁴¹ That Jughashvili was elected to the committee, and a like-minded comrade even made chairman, confirms his strong position.

His committee membership did not last long, though. At the committee’s 25 November meeting “for unknown reasons the fourth [*intelligent*]—Soso—did not appear.”⁴² Another police report has it that he absented himself because he “had been sent to the city of Batum by the committee . . . for the purpose of propaganda.”⁴³ In Batumi things started to go wrong.

³⁷ Arkomed, *Rabochee dvizhenie*, 55–56.

³⁸ See also Rieber, “Stalin as Georgian,” 39.

³⁹ Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 62 n.

⁴⁰ Zhordaniia, *Moia zhizn'*, 25.

⁴¹ Police report of 5 July 1902 (GARF f. 102, op. 199, d. 175, l. 93). For the number of committee members and the ratio of workers and intelligentsia in the new committee, see also Arkomed, *Rabochee dvizhenie*, 56; Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 63; Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 162, 356; and Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 106.

⁴² Police report of 2 December (?) 1901 (GARF f. 102, op. 226, d. 5.52.B, ll. 7–8).

⁴³ On 12 January 1902, Soso was replaced by Kalistrate Gogua (police report of 5 July 1902 [GARF f. 102, op. 199, d. 175, l. 93]). On Jughashvili’s election and his departure for Batumi, see also a police report of 1 May 1902 in *Batumskaia demonstratsiia 1902 goda* (Moscow: Partizdat TsK VKP(b), 1937), 240–42. In 1923, Giorgi Chkheidze gave an alternative list of elected committee members with Gogua instead of Jughashvili (Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 356). Most likely this is a mistake caused by the fact that Jughashvili was replaced in less than a fortnight.

If an anonymous article of November–December 1901 has been rightly attributed to Soso, we are fortunate to have an *exposé* of his views precisely at the time of his departure for Batumi. As before, the author saw history in terms of enlightenment—no longer to be promoted by poets but by “social-democratic consciousness.” He concluded that the socialists and the workers, whose eyes had long been “used to darkness,” were at last waking up from their “eternal sleep.” Jughashvili upheld the Marxist dogma of the vanguard role of the working class, who must never allow themselves to be turned into the “assistant of the ‘intelligentsia.’” *Social-democratic* intellectuals, however, should be respected as “white crows.” On a close reading, one sees that the desired fusion of socialists and workers would be a very unequal one. Whereas it was the socialists’ task “to develop the consciousness of the workers,” what the workers added to the fusion except for their “more powerful hands” was less clear.⁴⁴

On arrival in Batumi, Soso, together with the railway worker Kostia Kandelaki, convened a meeting of representatives of the illegal circles of the city to form a provisional organizational committee of six members, evenly divided among workers and *intelligenty*, and including Jughashvili and Kandelaki.⁴⁵ Zhordania again obfuscates some of the facts. He alleges that Soso settled in the workers’ quarters to recruit a “personal group which obeyed him blindly,” and conspired against the local social-democratic leaders and the Batumi Committee.⁴⁶ At the time, however, the Batumi Committee did not even exist.⁴⁷ The legal Sunday School for workers run by Karlo Chkheidze and Isidore Ramishvili did not serve in that capacity. In fact, Chkheidze and Ramishvili even agreed to pay Jughashvili’s expenses.⁴⁸ Given that Soso represented the Tiflis Committee, this is not surprising.

That he had been expelled from Tiflis is once again shown to be implausible, as the organizational committee he established remained under

⁴⁴ *Sochineniia*, 1: 11–14, 16, 25, 30. Soso’s authorship of the piece is not certain, but its inclusion in the *Sochineniia* shows that he in any case sympathized with its contents.

⁴⁵ See the autobiography of S. A. Todriia, who attended the meeting (RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 1931, l. 11); Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 179–80; I. S. Chulok, *Ocherki istorii batumskoi kommunisticheskoi organizatsii (1890–1921 gody)* (Batumi: Sabtsota Adzara, 1970), 40–41, 48; V. N. Stepanov, “U istokov partii,” *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 3 (1963): 103; G. K. Zhvaniia, *Bol’shevistskaia pechat’ Zakavkaz’ia nakanune i v period pervoi Russkoi revoliutsii* (Tbilisi: Tsentral’nyi komitet Kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii, 1958), 70; and *Batumskaiia demonstratsiia*, 79, 83.

⁴⁶ Zhordania, “Staline,” 4–5; Vakar, “Stalin.”

⁴⁷ Stepanov, “U istokov partii,” 103.

⁴⁸ Kostia Kandelaki (Georgian Presidential Archive [GPA] f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 20, ll. 185–87 [ChM]).

the Tiflis Committee's tutelage.⁴⁹ On 12 January 1902, the latter committee decided to assist the “*intelligent* Soso, who is in the city of Batum for propaganda purposes,” by sending him illegal literature.⁵⁰ The committee also assisted him in establishing an illegal printing press in Batumi.⁵¹ This assignment was carried out by Soso's group of propagandists: in February 1902, he visited Tiflis and at a meeting of the group Kamo was ordered to find the necessary equipment.⁵²

That he allowed an equal number of workers into the organizational committee suggests that Soso softened his harsh position on the question of workers and *intelligenty*, but he continued to defend the party intelligentsia. In February 1902, a meeting was convened to discuss whether “young *intelligenty*” might be enrolled in a Tiflis Committee, soon to be established. David Khartishvili (“Mokheve”) would allow only workers as full members of the organization; *intelligenty* should in his opinion merely carry out the workers' orders. Against this view, “representative of the intelligentsia” Archil Dolidze defended equal worker–intelligentsia participation in the party.⁵³ Thus it was the representative of Jughashvili's propagandists who defended the intelligentsia's interest in the formation of the new committee. Elisabedashvili recounts that Mokheve's joining the Tiflis Committee infuriated Jughashvili. During his visits to Tiflis he repeatedly warned Dolidze, Elisabedashvili, and the others against him.⁵⁴

The thing that brought down Jughashvili was the 9 March massacre, when the police opened fire on a workers' demonstration and 13 people were killed. Jughashvili was arrested on 5 April. A police report had it that he was locally known as the “teacher of the workers.”⁵⁵ The Tiflis Committee sent

⁴⁹ A 16 October 1905 police report reproduced in *Batumskaia demonstratsiia*, 244, claims that Jughashvili was sent by the Tiflis Committee and successfully overcame the stagnation of the Batumi Social Democrats. The organizations he and other propagandists established in the city's factories remained under Tiflis responsibility. See also Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 179.

⁵⁰ Police report of 16 January 1902 (GARF f. 102, op. 226, d. 5.52.A, t. 2, l. 3); Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 180–81, 186; police report of 1 May 1902, reproduced in *Batumskaia demonstratsiia*, 240–42.

⁵¹ Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 181–82; *Rasskazy starykh rabochikh Zakavkaz'ia o velikom Staline* (n.p.: Molodaia gvardiia, 1937), 119; *Batumskaia demonstratsiia*, 150; Chulok, *Ocherki istorii*, 39, 52.

⁵² Elisabedashvili, “Dedicated to the 35th Anniversary of the Lenin-Iskra Batumi Organization” (SSHG f. 3, op. 3, d. 1955/147, ll. 2–6 [ChM]).

⁵³ Baron Bibineishvili, *Za chetvert' veka (Revoliutsionnaia bor'ba v Gruzii)* (Moscow/Leningrad: Molodaia gvardiia, 1931), 33–34.

⁵⁴ Elisabedashvili (SSHG f. 3, op. 1, d. 1955/146, ll. 29–31 [ChM]).

⁵⁵ The report is dated 29 April (GARF f. 102, op. 199, d. 175, ll. 47–48).

Mokheve to Batumi as Soso's successor, and he accused Soso of having willfully provoked the bloodbath.⁵⁶

It then became clear that Jughashvili's propagandists served him as a loyal personal guard. Elisabedashvili recalls that Soso ordered him and another member of the group to Batumi to resist Mokheve, resulting in a "terrible fight."⁵⁷ Kandelaki recounts that the organization became "divided into two parts" and even came to fist fights. "Our aim was to drive Mokheve out of Batumi." Dolidze and two Tiflis workers traveled to Batumi to mobilize the local party against Mokheve.⁵⁸ Thus the imprisoned Jughashvili managed to throw the Batumi organization into turmoil. It was this show of heroics that finally established his name as a troublemaker.⁵⁹

Jughashvili was exiled to Siberia, whence he escaped to Batumi in January 1904. In Tiflis, he had been a successful enough propagandist to be elected to the committee, but now he lost the workers' support. When, on his return, he reported to the Batumi Committee, it refused to take him back.⁶⁰ Thereupon Soso organized a meeting with local workers he had worked with before. They received him with a good meal but advised him to leave town: "We love you very much, because you did a lot of work here, you helped us very much in our development. But we don't like your politics."⁶¹ The Batumi workers seem to have appreciated Soso as a committed leader and teacher, but the bloodbath for which he was held responsible and the open revolt against Mokheve made them turn their backs on him.

Defeat in Chiatura

Soso immediately set to work to re-establish links with social-democratic workers, but the next year he would suffer an even more dramatic setback. He began by using his old network to make a powerful return. One day Mikha Tskhakaia, one of the foremost leaders of the Union Committee overseeing

⁵⁶ Todriia (RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 1931, l. 11). See also Todriia in *Batumskaia demonstratsiia*, 98–99.

⁵⁷ Elisabedashvili (SSHG f. 3, op. 1, d. 1955/146, ll. 36–40); "Dedicated to the 35th Anniversary of the Lenin-Iskra Batumi Organization," ll. 7–11 [ChM].

⁵⁸ Kandelaki (GPA f. 8, op. 2.1, d. 20, ll. 207–10 [ChM]); *Batumskaia demonstratsiia*, 99.

⁵⁹ A 29 January 1903 police report indicates that Jughashvili stood "at the head of the organization in Batum," but that his "despotism" had angered Batumi activists to the point of provoking a "split in the organization" (GARF f. 102, op. 226, d. 5.52.V, ll. 26–27). A 9 February 1903 police report gives a garbled account of conflict with Jughashvili and Mokheve in the same camp of the "young" (GARF f. 102, op. 226, d. 5.52.V, l. 28).

⁶⁰ R. Arsenidze, "Iz vospominanii o Staline," *New Review/Novyi zhurnal*, no. 72 (1963): 218; Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 212–13.

⁶¹ Interview with Arsenidze, 26 July 1961, 21–23; Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 213–17.

the Transcaucasian party branch, was informed by Dolidze that Jughashvili wanted to see him. Jughashvili asked Tskhakaia for help in getting him a new party job. After two or three months, Tskhakaia sent him to Kutaisi.⁶²

In his memoirs of 1950–52, Kutaisi activist Sergo Kavtaradze explains that Tskhakaia sent Soso to assist him and other young, local radicals to form a new Imeretian–Mingrelian Committee consisting solely of “undergrounders.” Soso indeed established the new committee, including himself under the alias of Koba, and outrageously decided that for the sake of secrecy all contact with the old committee members should be cut off.⁶³ He had overplayed his hand, however. Former Imeretian–Mingrelian Committee member Noe Khomeriki accused “Don Quixote Koba” of having distorted the intentions of the Union Committee.⁶⁴ Tskhakaia agreed and dismissed Koba from the committee.⁶⁵ Then again, Tskhakaia instead co-opted him to the Union Committee, ordering him to concentrate his attention on the manganese workers of the Chiatura district in Kutaisi province.⁶⁶

At a Transcaucasian social-democratic conference in November 1904, Koba was assigned to oversee propaganda in Chiatura.⁶⁷ In late 1904 and early 1905, the Imeretian–Mingrelian Committee set up a group of propagandists in that district, with Koba as supervisor.⁶⁸ The composition of the new group confirms his involvement in their selection. Gigo Parkadze had been a member of Soso’s original Tiflis group of propagandists, and Mikha Davitashvili had been closely acquainted with them. The Tiflis worker Vano Kiasashvili had been an old acquaintance of Koba’s.⁶⁹ Some people were new to him, such as the former student of the Kutaisi Theological Seminary Kote Tsintsadze,

⁶² 1929 memoirs of Mikha Tskhakaia (RGASPI f. 157, op. 1, d. 54, ll. 22–23); 1939 memoirs of Tskhakaia (RGASPI f. 157, op. 1, d. 57, l. 104).

⁶³ RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 1538, ll. 129–34.

⁶⁴ For Noe Khomeriki’s letter, see GARF f. 102, op. 232, d. 5.11.A, ll. 174–75. See also B. F. Dodonov, “‘A tsel’ ta, chtoby pokazat’ sia narodu velikim chelovekom’: Politsiia i soratniki ob I. V. Staline,” *Otechestvennyye arkhivy*, no. 4 (1995): 78–80.

⁶⁵ Officially he was reduced to “nominal” membership (RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 1538, l. 134). In fact, he was probably dropped altogether (1929 autobiography of the Old Bolshevik Bibineishvili [RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 181, l. 5]).

⁶⁶ 1929 memoirs of Tskhakaia (RGASPI f. 157, op. 1, d. 54, ll. 22–24).

⁶⁷ Mikha Chodrishvili (RGASPI f. 558, op. 4, d. 651, ll. 226–27).

⁶⁸ For the names of participants, see Elisabedashvili, “RSDWP Caucasian Union Imeretian–Mingrelian Committee (Memoirs)” (SSHG f. 3, op. 3, d. 1955/147, ll. 1–6 [ChM]); Kote Tsintsadze, “My Memoirs,” *Revolutsiis Matiane*, no. 2 (1923): 117, and no. 3 (1923): 70; undated autobiography of the Old Bolshevik G. S. Vashadze (RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 328, l. 9); autobiography of Bibineishvili (RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 181, l. 6); memoirs of Vano Kiasashvili (GPA f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 25, ll. 261–62, 288 [ChM]); and 1948 memoirs of M. Beliashvili (RGASPI f. 558, op. 4, d. 651, l. 16).

⁶⁹ Kiasashvili (GPA f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 25, l. 288 [ChM]).

who recounts that he and Vano Intskirveli were enthusiastic Bolsheviks but “young, inexperienced,” and unfamiliar with the rules of *konspiratsiia*. Tsintsadze knew Kandelaki from prison.⁷⁰ In Chiatura, Soso established a new group of loyal propagandists.

By this time the debate between the Transcaucasian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had turned bitter. In January 1905, Zhordania returned from abroad after a long absence. His return served as a signal for most of the local committees to turn against the Bolshevik Union Committee. Which side a committee would come down on was often decided at semi-public meetings, with propagandists of the two camps attempting to win over the workers. The Bolsheviks mostly lost these debates. By the second half of the year, the Union Committee resembled a general without an army.⁷¹

During the debates, Chiatura remained Koba’s special preserve.⁷² The Menshevik Khariton Chavichvily observed his activities in the district for months. He was told by Isidore Ramishvili that the “Bolshevik propagandists” had converged on Chiatura, “with Comrade Koba leading them.” With the Bolsheviks splitting off from the rest of the party, the Mensheviks lacked the cadres to replace what Ramishvili called “all these intellectuals.” Chavichvily was struck by the immense personal loyalty of these young people to Koba.⁷³

The Bolsheviks were routinely accused by their Menshevik rivals of being the protectors of the party intelligentsia and of being indifferent or even hostile toward the worker cadres. This accusation was correct up to a point, but, as we saw, also somewhat facile. Though many local *komitetchiki* remained skeptical, Lenin was well aware of the need to increase the proletarian share of the committees. Chavichvily recalls that the workers loved Koba. When he arrived for a debate with the Menshevik Noe Ramishvili, they shouted “Soso” and embraced him. Jughashvili denied that Lenin disrespected the workers but insisted that the historical leaders of socialism had undeniably

⁷⁰ Tsintsadze, “My Memoirs,” 2: 115, 117 [ChM].

⁷¹ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 104–5, 122–26; Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 106, 112–13, 117–20; Filipp Makharadze, *Ocherki revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Zakavkaz’* (n.p.: Osizdat Gruzii, 1927), 127; A. L. Sidorov et al., eds., *Revoliutsiia 1905–1907 gg. v Rossii: Dokumenty i materialy. Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii vesnoi i letom 1905 goda, aprel’–sentiabr’* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), pt. 2, bk. 1: 117–19; G. I. Devdariani et al., eds., *Ocherki istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii, 1883–1970* (Tbilisi: Izdatel’stvo TsK KP Gruzii, 121, 125).

⁷² S. Khanoian in *Zaria vostoka*, 24 January 1925 (RGASPI f. 558, op. 4, d. 649, l. 361); Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 231–35.

⁷³ Khariton Chavichvily, *Patrie, prison, exil* (Paris: Défense de la France, 1946), 88–89, 92, 113, 116–17.

been *intelligently*. He continued to defend strict *konspiratsiia*. The workers embraced Soso with tears in their eyes but voted for Ramishvili.⁷⁴

That summer, Koba bent over backward to prove his proletarian orientation. In a Union Committee brochure published in May 1905, he went even further than Lenin in his appreciation of the workers' instinctive socialist inclinations: the workers would be able to reach socialism without the assistance of the party, even though at the price of considerable delay.⁷⁵ In defending the Bolsheviks against Menshevik charges, the main point he hammered on in this brochure (as well as in an article published in August) was that, inevitably, it was the socialist minority of the bourgeois intelligentsia, the "social-democratic *intelligently*," who worked out "socialist consciousness (i.e., scientific socialism)." "As long as they remain proletarians," workers simply lack the time and the opportunity to engage in "science." Soso did allow that on an individual basis *former* workers might participate in the process of developing the socialist consciousness, but he did not present this as an ideal urgently requiring realization but rather as a mere possibility. What he did emphasize, however, was that it was the RSDWP as a whole—including its worker members—that introduced scientific consciousness among the worker masses.⁷⁶

Several authors have pointed to these remarkable statements made in the summer of 1905.⁷⁷ Theoretically they are interesting, but the basic point of the intelligentsia as the fount of scientific socialism, as the element of awareness, remained intact. In Koba's model, the role of workers in the RSDWP remained that of spreading the "scientific" product that the *intelligently* produced. In fairness, he did quote Lenin approvingly to the effect that it would be desirable for the committees to be dominated by "advanced workers."⁷⁸ This point remained so underemphasized, however, that it is hard to take it seriously.

Increasingly, Jughashvili came to see the debate with the Mensheviks in personal terms: what really distinguished the Bolsheviks from their rivals was that they were *better people*, a heroic elite who in terms of character were elevated far above their weak-kneed opponents. On several occasions during 1905, he elaborated on the ideal of perfect commitment that all party members

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 68–69, 71–76, 79.

⁷⁵ *Sochineniia*, 1: 98, 105.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 99–103, 113–14, 162–65, 170.

⁷⁷ Robert Mayer, "The Status of a Classic Text: Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* after 1902," *History of European Ideas* 22, 4 (1996): 312–13; Himmer, "First Impressions," 77; Krylova, "Beyond the Spontaneity–Consciousness Paradigm," 20–21; Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered*, 29ff., 79, 657–58; Erik van Ree, "Stalin as a Marxist Philosopher," *Studies in East European Thought* 52, 4 (2000): 265–67.

⁷⁸ *Sochineniia*, 1: 169–70.

should live up to.⁷⁹ In the course of the Chiatura debates, Jughashvili began to identify this heroic ideal of the committed self as a specifically proletarian psychology. In the May 1905 brochure, he characterized the supposedly vacillating Menshevik spirit with its lack of discipline as an “intelligentsia psychology.” On the contrary, the Bolsheviks stood for “*proletarian firmness*.”⁸⁰ Koba shared the widely held social-democratic appreciation of the proletarian character as particularly firm and determined. This could theoretically have stimulated him to support proletarianization of the committees. The example of Kiasashvili proves that he was now at a minimum prepared to accept former workers among his propagandists. His heart, however, seems not to have been in this. At a time when the Bolshevik ship was fast sinking, the tactical element of shoring up the Bolshevik position among the workers was an important motive in bringing up the point of the proletarian and intelligentsia psychology.

Koba’s authentic emotions shine through in a private letter of 8 May to the Bolshevik center abroad. It betrayed deep concern about the absence of worker support for the Bolsheviks. Even so, Koba did not suggest infusing the Bolshevik apparatus with new proletarian blood but finding “energetic, firm and principled people.” Such people would have to win the allegiance of the worker masses, but they need not be workers themselves. Significantly he described the Mensheviks as “vulgar sentimentalists of the pre-party period of *worker-love* [*rabocheliubstvo*],” and he mocked the “‘good’ worker-lovers, who soon bore the workers.”⁸¹ “Worker-lovers” were those like Mokheve, who favored a discriminatory policy against the party intelligentsia. Even under duress, Koba remained irritated by those who fawned over workers.

Unfortunately for him, Jughashvili’s propagandistic efforts were not sufficiently convincing. In the course of 1905, the great majority of Chiatura workers abandoned the Bolsheviks, whom they saw as the intelligentsia faction. One district after another went over to the Mensheviks, with the Bolsheviks retaining only one.⁸²

Leader of Expropriators

At the turn of 1905–6, the Transcaucasian Social Democrats overcame their organizational split. Koba’s special orientation on Chiatura was now a thing

⁷⁹ Ibid., 66, 129. See also an article in *proletariatis brdzola* of 15 August 1905 (RGASPI f. 71, op. 10, d. 169, l. 274).

⁸⁰ *Sochineniia*, 1: 127–30 (emphasis in orig.).

⁸¹ RGASPI f. 558, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 5–8; f. 71, op. 10, d. 189, ll. 16–18.

⁸² Chavichvily, *Patrie, prison, exil*, 110. See also Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 119–20; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 122; and Arsenidze, “Iz vospominanii o Staline,” 229.

of the past, and he joined the United Tiflis Committee.⁸³ After his return to Tiflis we hear no more of his responsibilities as a propagandist. Instead, he became supervisor of the notorious group of “expropriators.” In Montefiore’s *Young Stalin* Jughashvili’s leadership to this armed unit is treated as a culminating point in a spectacular criminal career, but it might be more aptly seen as a mark of personal failure.⁸⁴ Having for the second time failed as a propagandist to hold on to the loyalty of his worker following, Koba withdrew into a dark shadow world where he could act on his own terms.

Much scholarly attention has been paid to these expropriators.⁸⁵ The prehistory of the unit, however, has not yet been brought to light. Its establishment was part of the militarization of Transcaucasian social democracy during the revolutionary events of 1905.⁸⁶ To reconstruct the story of the unit, we must for a moment return to Chiatura. In 1905, Jughashvili ordered the formation of a Bolshevik armed squad in that district, a fact first established by Montefiore.⁸⁷ Strikingly, among those involved in a leadership capacity were Kiasashvili, Tsintsadze, Intskirveli, and Davitashvili.⁸⁸ It appears that the group of revolutionary fighters evolved from the group of propagandists, who, with the deterioration of their effectiveness among the manganese workers, were transferred to military tasks.

Elisabedashvili recalls that at the turn of the year Jughashvili “gathered around him the comrades who fled from the regions to Tiflis.”⁸⁹ How the unit was organized must be pieced together from scraps of information found mainly in a number of memoirs. Most plausibly, in early 1906 the

⁸³ Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 143 n. Arsenidze (“Iz vospominanii o Staline,” 220) recounts serving with Koba on that committee until his (Arsenidze’s) arrest in April 1906. According to an 8 April 1906 police report, at a March Transcaucasian social-democratic conference the Tiflis Committee was represented by eight Mensheviks and two Bolsheviks, one of whom was “the *intelligent Soso*” (Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 245).

⁸⁴ Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, prologue, pt. 2.

⁸⁵ Montefiore (ibid., 7, 129) calls them “the Outfit.” See also Boris Souvarine, *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism* (n.p.: Alliance Book Corporation, 1939), 93–104; Trotsky, *Stalin*, 100–10; Deutscher, *Stalin*, 87–89; Robert Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 102–3; Adam B. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), 89–95; Miklós Kun, *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 69–84; and Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina*, 256–58.

⁸⁶ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*; Erik van Ree, “Reluctant Terrorists? Transcaucasian Social-Democracy, 1901–9,” *Europe–Asia Studies* 60, 1 (2008): 127–54.

⁸⁷ Kiasashvili (GPA f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 25, ll. 289–90 [ChM]); Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, 112.

⁸⁸ Kiasashvili (GPA f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 25, ll. 263–66 [ChM]); Tsintsadze, “My Memoirs,” 3: 71–72, 76–78 [ChM]; Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 138.

⁸⁹ Elisabedashvili (SSHG f. 3, op. 2, d. 1955/146, ll. 68–72 [ChM]).

United Tiflis Committee ordered the establishment of several armed units, one of them Bolshevik. The committee assigned its member Jughashvili plus Kamo to set up the Bolshevik expropriators group, to be headed by Tsintsadze. Jughashvili proceeded to organize it around a nucleus of people from the Chiatura squad, among whom was Intskirveli. Also included were two workers Koba knew from his Batumi days: Vano Kalandadze and Eliso Lominadze. Kamo did not actually join the group but was made responsible for the military–technical infrastructure.⁹⁰ When, in April–May 1906, the Menshevik-dominated Fourth Party Congress condemned expropriations, Tsintsadze decided to turn the group into an independent, purely Bolshevik unit. He recalls that the “advanced comrades” agreed, “especially Koba.”⁹¹ After Tsintsadze’s arrest in February 1907, Kamo joined the group to become its leader.⁹² Thus we have a Tiflis group of propagandists, reconstituted on a new basis in Chiatura, subsequently transferred to military work, and reborn once again as the Tiflis expropriators.

Jughashvili exercised no technical or operational leadership. According to Boris Nicolaevsky, he delivered political lectures and shielded the group from the local Menshevik party organization.⁹³ Nonetheless, according to the memoirs of the former Bolshevik Tat’iana Vulich, who was close to the group during the summer of 1906, though Koba did not participate in any operation, he was the “supreme leader of the combat organization.”⁹⁴

Compared to the old intelligentsia unit established in 1900 and 1901, there were now several workers among the expropriators, but I have found

⁹⁰ Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 143 n., 155; memoirs of Bachua Kuprashvili (GPA f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 624, ll. 1–5 [ChM]); autobiography of G. M. Mgaloblishvili (RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 1243, l. 7); Kote Tsintsadze, *How to Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat: My Memoirs from 1903 to 1920* (Tiflis: n.p. 1927), 40 [ChM]; L. Shaumian, *Kamo: Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' professional'nogo revoliutsionera S. A. Ter-Petrosiana* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959), 42–43; Aleksandra Darakhvelidze-Margvelashvili, “Memoirs” (GPA f. 8, op. 2.2, d. 64 [ChM]); B. Bibineishvili, *Kamo* (n.p.: Staryi bol'shevik, 1934), 98–101; 1950 memoirs of Aladzhalova (RGASPI f. 558, op. 4, d. 656, ll. 47–49, 54–58); 1934 autobiography of Old Bolshevik Aladzhalova (RGASPI f. 124, op. 1, d. 28, ll. 4–6); memoirs of Tat’iana Vulich (HIA, Nic., box 207, folder 10, p. 2, and folder 11, p. 1).

⁹¹ Tsintsadze, *How to Struggle*, 40–41; Uratadze, *Vospominaniia*, 162; Talakvadze, *K istorii kommunisticheskoi partii Gruzii*, 157–58.

⁹² Kuprashvili (GPA f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 624, ll. 11–13, 18, 26 [ChM]); Bibineishvili, *Kamo*, 98; Tsintsadze, *How to Struggle*, 43, 47, 49; S. F. Medvedeva-Ter-Petrosian, *Geroi revoliutsii* (“tovarishch Kamo”) (Moscow/Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1925), 60 n.; Medvedeva-Ter-Petrosian, “Tovarishch Kamo (s primechaniiami A. Zonina),” *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, nos. 8–9 (31–32) (1924): 145 n.

⁹³ Kun, *Stalin*, 73.

⁹⁴ Vulich (HIA, Nic., box 207, folder 11, p. 1).

no evidence of a policy of special worker mobilization.⁹⁵ Perhaps not surprisingly given his poor record as a leader of workers, Jughashvili did not alter his views as to the role of the party intelligentsia. In resisting the “worker-loving” tendencies in the Georgian party branch, he did more than merely defend intelligentsia members against discrimination. He assigned the leading role in the committees to the *intelligenty*, as the carriers of science and socialist awareness. As a Marxist he would mostly have avoided formulating the leading role of the intelligentsia as a principle, but in a revealing article in *gantiadi* [The Dawn] of 10 March 1906 he came close to doing just that. He characterized the “struggle against the socialist intelligentsia” as typical of false police socialists who incited the workers against their mentors under the pretense of “we are workers.” Not only should socialist *intelligenty* be welcomed in the party; it would be “even better if they ... resolutely lead it.” Koba concluded that the “struggle against the socialist intelligentsia is a struggle against awareness. To expel the intelligentsia means to expel awareness from the party.”⁹⁶

An obituary for the social-democratic worker G. P. Telia, published in March 1907, helps us understand what it was that bothered the young Stalin about workers. In a way, this was a paean to them: Koba concluded that “only the proletariat gives birth to heroes like Telia.” But, significantly, in a list of traits most characteristic of the RSDWP and eminently shared by Telia, “thirst for knowledge” came first, to be followed by steadfastness and moral fiber. Even more significantly, Koba seemed to put Telia on a shield as an *exceptional* worker, comparing him favorably with “those ‘advanced’ workers who portray themselves as ‘social-democrats by birth,’ and being total ignoramuses, for the fun of it cry: we don’t need knowledge, we are workers.”⁹⁷ Jughashvili was irritated by what he saw as the workers’ arrogant self-confidence and their supposed belief in their own untutored, natural leadership roles, which made them in his view unprepared to humbly learn from those more knowledgeable than they. For all their robustness of character, in Koba’s eyes this made all too many workers unsuitable as leaders.

A few days later, Jughashvili gave his comments on the recent Menshevik-dominated elections of Tiflis delegates for the coming party congress. They confirm that his intelligentsia bias remained unshaken.

⁹⁵ Tsintsadze (*How to Struggle*, 42, 44) and Kuprashvili (GPA f. 8, op. 2/I, d. 624, ll. 4–5, 9–12 [ChM]) describe the group’s expansion in 1906 and early 1907, when more Chiatura workers were included.

⁹⁶ RGASPI f. 71, op. 10, d. 193, ll. 26–28.

⁹⁷ *Sochineniia*, 2: 27–31. For alternative readings of this article, see Rieber, “Stalin, Man of the Borderlands,” 1669–70; Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*, 136–37; and Himmer, “On the Origin,” 284–85.

Koba noted that, due to their “anti-social-democratic” tendency of “setting off workers against *intelligenty*,” the Mensheviks had always been disinclined to elect intelligentsia delegates. Unexpectedly, he then turned round to accuse the Mensheviks of having at *this* conference elected too *many* intelligentsia delegates. But rather than indicating a reorientation on his part, the comment strikingly confirms that he still considered workers to be lacking in knowledge and to be unfit for serious leadership tasks: Koba suggested that more workers should have been added to the delegation, not because of their qualities but as trainees. Insufficiently knowledgeable workers serving as delegates could do no harm because the job of delegate was not to be taken seriously anyhow: “Everybody knows that our delegates visit a congress not so much for active work as for acquiring knowledge and experience.” And it was the workers who were “more in need of acquiring experience” than the *intelligenty*.⁹⁸

Some Concluding Thoughts on Stalin and Stalinism

Reduced to its simplest premise, what the young Stalin defended was the primacy of consciousness guided by “scientific socialism.” As the leading factor in the party’s development, knowledge outweighed the factor of strength of character. Soso’s defense of the leading role of the party intelligentsia followed naturally from this premise, as did his (not very enthusiastic) admission that former workers, no longer tied to the bench, might individually join the ranks of this intelligentsia.

Although accents changed in important ways, over a divide of 30 years the deep structure of Stalin’s discourse remained unchanged. Iosif Stalin has often been treated as a narrow-minded *praktik*, sharply opposed to the more sophisticated Old Bolshevik intellectuals and theoreticians. This one-sided view has always been difficult to reconcile with some of Stalin’s known traits. Undeniably, the dictator had a taste for the cultural and the artistic. He loved the theater and was well read in Russian literature. Though his insights were mostly primitive, he had a wide scientific interest, ranging from linguistics to economics and from ancient history to philosophy. Though a crude dogmatist, his interest in Marxism was authentic enough. In a twisted way his self-understanding as a man of ideas showed in his cultic presentation as the Leader of Genius and Great Teacher.

Nonetheless, Stalin is himself among those responsible for his image as a mere *praktik*. On several occasions he admitted that in the past he had been such a person, with a certain carelessness in theoretical questions and

⁹⁸ *dro*, 23, 24, and 27 March 1907 (RGASPI f. 71, op. 10, d. 196, ll. 52–54).

submerged in practical-organizational work. It seems that in his own mind he remained something of a *praktik* even after the revolution.⁹⁹ Most likely he stopped thinking of himself in these terms only after Lenin's death, when he began to construct a public profile as an expert in Marxism.

Like other Bolshevik activists who chose not to take shelter in the West European capitals but to remain in Russia, Stalin led the dangerous life of the underground. He was often on the run, and people like him were mostly not in a position to write tracts on the finer points of Marxist theory. That it was difficult for him to function effectively as a *literator*, however, is not to say that he would not have considered himself an *intelligent* all the same. His acid comments against the Bolshevik emigrés were arguably inspired by a sense of jealousy against fellow *intelligenty*, who unlike him abandoned their posts and created favorable circumstances to receive public recognition as Marxist theoreticians. Stalin must have experienced a sense of vindication when, after Lenin's death, he could at last show what he was worth in Marxist theory, as he understood it.¹⁰⁰

But more than difficult circumstances prevented him from deploying his supposed theoretical talents. For a social-democratic *intelligent* to assume the role of a *praktik* and not that of a *literator* was not only a matter of opportunity but also of orientation. The *literator's* main audience was his fellow *intelligenty*, educated readers of brochures and journals. The audience of the *praktik* (either propagandist or organizer) was the workers. The key to the problem of Stalin's prerevolutionary self-image lies in his identity as a "teacher." Being a propagandist by definition would have defined him as an *intelligent*, but at the same time it placed him in that category of the intelligentsia who in terms of their "job" were directly oriented toward the workers. As a social type, the teacher is a person who is not primarily engaged in creating knowledge but in transmitting it. The teacher's main orientation is not toward debate with his or her peers but "downward" toward his or her pupils. Seen from this angle, the young Stalin's identity as a teacher separated him at once from the workers, to which category he did not belong, but also from the more elitist *literatory* section of the intelligentsia who, unlike him, had no direct access to the workers. One way to conceptualize the power struggle in

⁹⁹ See the 1946 foreword to the first volume of his works: *Sochineniia*, 1: xiii. See also his remarks at the 7 November 1937 party at Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov's Kremlin apartment: V. A. Nevezhin, *Zastol'nye rechi Stalina: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow/St. Petersburg: AIRO-XX, 2003), 149, 155.

¹⁰⁰ For the question of the young Stalin as *praktik*, see also Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*, chap. 4; and Service, *Stalin*, chap. 9.

the 1920s, then, is in terms of this conflict within two sections of the intelligentsia: former *literatory* and *praktiki*.

That Stalin resorted to terror against the old intelligentsia during the Great Break of 1928–31 does not testify to an anti-intelligentsia turn on his part. Before the revolution, it had been generally acknowledged by Marxists, including Ioseb Jughashvili, that as a sociological stratum the intelligentsia represented a bourgeois force. This remained of little relevance at a time when the Social Democrats' attention was focused on fine-tuning the inner-party relations between workers and the socialist minority of the *intelligenty*, which Jughashvili considered the organization's center of awareness. But when it fell to him and his fellow Bolsheviks to create a new state, the issue of the intelligentsia as a stratum became of overriding importance. Deemed politically unreliable as representatives of the old world, the old intelligentsia was crushed.¹⁰¹

But Stalin was no Mao, no Pol Pot: he targeted these people not because they were an intelligentsia but because they were an intelligentsia of the wrong kind. To educate a politically reliable new intelligentsia was even more important for him than to crush the old one. Also, his large-scale mobilization of workers to replenish the ranks of the intelligentsia did not turn Stalin into a late convert to workerism. The formation of the new intelligentsia from below was essentially a one-time event. There was no ongoing process of continuous proletarianization: during the Great Terror Stalin once again proved willing to destroy sections of the intelligentsia, but by the late 1930s the dynamic moment of *vydvizhenie*, worker promotion, had passed. Instead, Stalin now turned to the consolidation and protection of his new intelligentsia.¹⁰² At that point workerism once again became a threat.

Stalin observed a continuity between his struggle against workerism in the RSDWP and the challenges he faced in the 1930s. In September–October 1938, he presented his views on the subject in three speeches, all of them on the occasion of the publication of the *Short Course in the History of the Communist Party*. The dictator remarked that the hostility toward the intelligentsia in the USSR reminded him of the old days, when Social Democrats

¹⁰¹ For Stalin's views on the old intelligentsia as a stratum and its socialist minority, see I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 1 [14]: 1934–1940 (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1967), 396–98.

¹⁰² Stalin acknowledged that the new intelligentsia need not be drawn exclusively from workers and peasants but could come in part from the “toiling intelligentsia.” See “I. V. Stalin v rabote nad Kratkim kursom istorii VKP(b): Okonchanie,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 4 (2003): 19; and *Sochineniia*, 1 [14]: 145, 169, 398.

like the Polish Wacław Machajski had hoped to chase the *intelligenty* away from the party. What had been foolish then was even more foolish now.¹⁰³

For Stalin, the *intelligenty* remained the element of leadership. He sharply rebuked those who accused workers of betraying their class and of turning themselves into *intelligenty*, when they were educated to move up to administrative positions. The dictator acknowledged that such workers indeed became part of the new “Soviet intelligentsia,” which he defined as “all people who are leading cadres.” This huge organism was responsible for the direction of society and the state in all its branches—ideologically, culturally, economically, politically, and militarily. There was nothing shameful in belonging to the new intelligentsia, who should on the contrary be honored as the “salt of the earth.” With this formula Stalin effectively legitimized full power for the cadres to “decide everything” and gave short shrift to any remaining notions of a state guided by workers. His obsession with knowledge was strong enough to formulate the “following theoretical thought, that we want to transform the whole working class and the whole peasantry into an intelligentsia, by raising their level.”¹⁰⁴ Although spreading *kul’turnost’* and education among the workers was an important part of Stalin’s program, however, it was never his intention to turn the workers literally into an intelligentsia and thereby subvert his newly created socio-political hierarchy.¹⁰⁵

Stalin felt justified in calling the USSR administrative cadres an “intelligentsia” because in their work they were supposed to be guided by the emancipatory socialist idea. In that idea, from his perspective, lay the continuity between them and the social-democratic *intelligenty* of the old days. But for Stalin they were also an intelligentsia simply because they performed nonphysical labor. The dictator was at pains to explain that not only the Soviet state but *all* states were ruled by people who “had stopped performing physical labor and work with their intellect [*zhivut umstvennym trudom*].”¹⁰⁶ Though Stalin never formally revoked the Marxist dogma of the leading role of the proletariat, for all practical purposes he did just that when he turned it into a dogma that states are and should be ruled precisely by those *not* working with their hands. Here one recognizes Stalin’s personal version of the aristocratic principle, centering

¹⁰³ “I. V. Stalin v rabote,” 7, 19; N. N. Maslov, “I. V. Stalin o ‘Kratkom kurse istorii VKP(b),’” *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 4 (1994): 28.

¹⁰⁴ Maslov, “I. V. Stalin o ‘Kratkom kurse,’” 28; “I. V. Stalin v rabote,” 5, 7–9, 15, 19–20.

¹⁰⁵ Stalin, in fact, rejected the Marxist utopian notion of the complete fusion of mental and physical labor as unrealistic. See *Sochineniia*, 1 [14]: 83–84; 3 [16]: 217–23.

¹⁰⁶ “I. V. Stalin v rabote,” 19.

around the primacy of knowledge, and which guided him from his early days as a Tiflis activist onward: *the head rules the hand*.

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