

= Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic =

The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic ; ( Armenian SSR ; Armenian : Հայկական Սովետական Հանրապետություն ; Russian : Армянская Советская Сосиалистическая Республика ) also commonly referred to as Soviet Armenia or simply as Armenia was one of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union in December 1922 . It was established in December 1920 , when the Soviets took over control of the short-lived First Republic of Armenia and lasted until 1991 . It is sometimes called the Second Republic of Armenia , following the First Republic of Armenia 's demise .

As part of the Soviet Union , the Armenian SSR transformed from a largely agricultural hinterland to an important industrial production center , while its population almost quadrupled from around 880,000 in 1926 to 3.3 million in 1989 due to natural growth and large-scale influx of Armenian Genocide survivors and their descendants . On August 23 , 1990 , it was renamed the Republic of Armenia , but remained in the Soviet Union until its official proclamation of independence on 21 September 1991 . Its independence was recognised on 26 December 1991 when the Soviet Union ceased to exist . After the dissolution of the Soviet Union , the state of the post-Soviet Union Republic of Armenia existed until the adoption of the new constitution in 1995 .

= = History = =

= = = Sovietization = = =

From 1828 with the Treaty of Turkmenchay to the October Revolution in 1917 , Eastern Armenia was part of the Russian Empire and partly confined to the borders of the Erivan Governorate . After the October Revolution , Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin 's government announced that minorities in the empire could pursue a course of self-determination . Following the collapse of the empire , in May 1918 Armenia , and its neighbors Azerbaijan and Georgia , declared their independence from Russian rule and each established their respective republics . After the near-annihilation of the Armenians during the Armenian Genocide and the subsequent Turkish-Armenian War , the historic Armenian area in the Ottoman Empire was overrun with despair and devastation .

A number of Armenians joined the advancing 11th Soviet Red Army . Afterward , Turkey and the newly proclaimed Soviet republics in the Caucasus negotiated the Treaty of Kars , in which Turkey resigned from its claims to Batumi to Georgia in exchange for the Kars territory , corresponding to the modern-day Turkish provinces of Kars , Iğdır , and Ardahan . The medieval Armenian capital of Ani , as well as the cultural icon of the Armenian people Mount Ararat , were located in the ceded area . Additionally , Joseph Stalin , then acting Commissar for Nationalities , granted the areas of Nakhchivan and Nagorno-Karabakh ( both of which were promised to Armenia by the Bolsheviks in 1920 ) to Azerbaijan .

From March 12 , 1922 to December 5 , 1936 , Armenia was a part of the Transcaucasian SFSR ( TSFSR ) together with the Georgian SSR and the Azerbaijan SSR . The policies of the first Soviet Armenian government , the Revolutionary Committee ( Revkom ) , headed by young , inexperienced , and militant communists such as Sarkis Kasyan and Avetis Nuriyanyan , were implemented in a highhanded manner and did not take into consideration the poor conditions of the republic and the general weariness of the people after years of conflict and civil strife . As the Soviet Armenian historian Bagrat Borian , who was to later perish during Stalin 's purges , wrote in 1929 :

The Revolutionary Committee started a series of indiscriminate seizures and confiscations , without regard to class , and without taking into account the general economic and psychological state of the peasantry . Devoid of revolutionary planning , and executed with needless brutality , these confiscations were unorganized and promiscuous . Unattended by disciplinary machinery , without preliminary propaganda or enlightenment , and with utter disregard of the country 's unusually distressing condition , the Revolutionary Committee issued its orders nationalizing food supply of the

cities and peasantry . With amazing recklessness and unconcern , they seized and nationalized everything ? military uniforms , artisan tools , rice mills , water mills , barbers ' implements , beehives , linen , household furniture , and livestock .

Such was the degree and scale of the requisitioning and terror imposed by the local Cheka that in February 1921 the Armenians , led by former leaders of the republic , rose up in revolt and briefly unseated the communists in Yerevan . The Red Army , which was campaigning in Georgia at the time , returned to suppress the revolt and drove its leaders out of Armenia .

Convinced that these heavy @-@ handed tactics were the source of the alienation of the native population to Soviet rule , in 1921 Moscow appointed an experienced administrator , Alexander Miasnikian , to carry out a more moderate policy and one better attuned to Armenian sensibilities . With the introduction of the New Economic Policy ( NEP ) , Armenians began to enjoy a period of relative stability . Life under the Soviet rule proved to be a soothing balm in contrast to the turbulent final years of the Ottoman Empire . The Armenians received medicine , food , as well as other provisions from the central government and extensive literacy reforms were carried out . The situation was difficult for the Armenian Apostolic Church , however , which became a regular target of criticism in educational books and in the media and struggled greatly under Communism .

= = = Stalin 's reign = = =

After the death of Vladimir Lenin in January 1924 , there was a brief power struggle in the Soviet Union , from which Joseph Stalin rose to take the reins of power . Armenian society and its economy were changed by Stalin and his fellow Moscow policymakers . In 1936 , the TSFSR was dissolved under Stalin 's orders and the socialist republics of Armenia , Azerbaijan , and Georgia were established instead . For the Armenian people , conditions grew worse under Stalin 's rule . In a period of twenty @-@ five years , Armenia was industrialized and educated under strictly prescribed conditions , and nationalism was harshly suppressed .

Stalin took several measures in persecuting the Armenian Church , already weakened by the Armenian Genocide and the Russification policies of the Russian Empire . In the 1920s , the private property of the church was confiscated and priests were harassed . Soviet assaults against the Armenian Church accelerated under Stalin , beginning in 1929 , but momentarily eased in the following years to improve the country 's relations with the Armenian diaspora . In 1932 , Khoren Muradpekyan became known as Khoren I and assumed the title of His Holiness the Catholicos . However , in the late 1930s , the Soviets renewed their attacks against the Church . This culminated in the murder of Khoren in 1938 as part of the Great Purge , and the closing of the Catholicosate of Echmiatsin on August 4 , 1938 . The Church , however , managed to survive underground and in the diaspora .

The Great Purge was a series of campaigns of political repression and persecution in the Soviet Union orchestrated against members of the Communist Party , writers and intellectuals , peasants and ordinary citizens . In September 1937 Stalin dispatched Anastas Mikoyan , along with Georgy Malenkov and Lavrentiy Beria , with a list of 300 names to Yerevan to oversee the liquidation of the Communist Party of Armenia ( CPA ) , which was largely made up of Old Bolsheviks . Armenian communist leaders such as Vagharshak Ter @-@ Vahanyan and Aghasi Khanjian fell victim to the purge , the former being a defendant at the first of the Moscow Show Trials . Mikoyan tried , but failed , to save one from being executed during his trip to Armenia . That person was arrested during one of his speeches to the CPA by Beria . Over a thousand people were arrested and seven of nine members of the Armenian Politburo were sacked from office . According to one study , 4 @, @ 530 people were executed by firing squad in the years 1937 @-@ 38 alone , the majority of them having been accused of anti @-@ Soviet or " counter @-@ revolutionary " activities , for belonging to the nationalist Dashnak party , or Trotskyism .

As with various other ethnic minorities who lived in the Soviet Union under Stalin , tens of thousands of Armenians were executed or deported . In 1936 , Beria and Stalin worked to deport Armenians to Siberia in an attempt to bring Armenia 's population under 700 @, @ 000 in order to justify an annexation into Georgia . Under Beria 's command , police terror was used to strengthen

the party 's political hold on the population and suppress all expressions of nationalism . Many writers , artists , scientists and political leaders , including the writer Axel Bakunts and the celebrated poet Yeghishe Charents , were executed or forced into exile . Additionally , in 1944 , roughly 200 @,@ 000 Hamshenis ( Sunni Muslim Armenians who live near the Black Sea coastal regions of Russia , Georgia and Turkey ) were deported from Georgia to areas of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan . Further deportations of Armenians from the coastal region occurred in 1948 , when 58 @,@ 000 alleged supporters of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Greeks were forced to move to Kazakhstan .

= = = World War II = = =

Armenia was spared the devastation and destruction that wrought most of the western Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War of World War II . The Wehrmacht never reached the South Caucasus , which they intended to do in order to capture the oil fields in Azerbaijan . Still , Armenia played a valuable role in the war in providing food , manpower and war matériel . An estimated 300 ? 500 @,@ 000 Armenians served in the war , almost half of whom did not return . Many attained the highest rank of Hero of the Soviet Union . Over sixty Armenians were promoted to the rank of general , and with an additional four eventually achieving the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union : Ivan Bagramyan ( the first non @-@ Slavic commander to hold the position of front commander when he was assigned to be the commander of the First Baltic Front in 1943 ) , Admiral Ivan Isakov , Hamazasp Babadzhanian , and Sergei Khudyakov . The Soviet government , in an effort to shore up popular support for the war , also allowed for token expressions of nationalism with the re @-@ publication of Armenian novels , the production of films such as David Bek ( 1944 ) , and the easing of restrictions placed against the Church . Stalin temporarily relented his attacks on religion during the war . This led to the election of bishop Gevorg in 1945 as new Catholicos Gevorg VI . He was subsequently allowed to reside in Echmiatsin .

Some Armenians who were captured by the Germans as POWs opted to serve in German battalions rather than risk life @-@ threatening conditions in POW camps . As with many Soviet soldiers who surrendered to German forces during fighting , Armenians were punished by Stalin and sent to work at labor camps located in Siberia .

At the end of the war , after Germany 's capitulation , many Armenians in both the Republic , including Armenian Communist Party First Secretary Grigor Harutyunyan ( Arutyunov ) , and the diaspora lobbied Stalin to reconsider the issue of taking back the provinces of Kars , I?d?r , and Ardahan , which Armenia had lost to Turkey in the Treaty of Kars . In September , 1945 , the Soviet Union announced that it would annul the Soviet @-@ Turkish treaty of friendship that was signed in 1925 . Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov presented the claims put forth by the Armenians to the other Allied heads .

Turkey itself was in no condition to fight against the Soviet Union , which had emerged as a superpower after the war . By the autumn of 1945 , Soviet troops in the Caucasus and Soviet @-@ occupied Iran were already assembling for an invasion of Turkey . However , as the hostility between the East and West developed into the Cold War , especially after the issuing of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 , Turkey strengthened its ties with the West . The Soviet Union relinquished its claims over the lost territories , understanding that the newly formed NATO would intervene on Turkey 's side in the event of a conflict .

= = = Armenian immigration = = =

With the republic suffering heavy losses after the war , Stalin allowed an open immigration policy in Armenia ; the diaspora were invited to repatriate to Armenia ( nergaght ) and revitalize the country 's population and bolster its workforce . Armenians living in countries such as Cyprus , France , Greece , Iraq , Lebanon , and Syria were primarily the survivors or the descendants of the genocide . They were offered the option of having their expenses paid by the Soviet government for their trip back to their homeland . An estimated 150 @,@ 000 Armenians immigrated to Soviet Armenia

between 1946 and 1948 and settled in Yerevan , Leninakan , Kirovakan and other towns .

Lured by numerous incentives such as food coupons , better housing and other benefits , they were received coldly by the Armenians living in the Republic upon their arrival . The repatriates spoke the Western Armenian dialect , instead of the Eastern Armenian spoken in Soviet Armenia . They were often addressed as aghbars ( " brothers " ) by Armenians living in the republic , due to their different pronunciation of the word . Although initially used in humor , the word went on to carry on a more pejorative connotation . Their treatment by the Soviet government was not much better . A number of Armenian immigrants in 1946 had their belongings confiscated upon arrival at Odessa 's port , as they had taken with them everything they had , including clothes and jewelry . This was the first disappointment experienced by Armenians ; however , as there was no possibility of return the Armenians were forced to continue their journey to Armenia . Many of the immigrants were targeted by Soviet intelligence agencies and the Ministry of Interior for real or perceived ties to Armenian nationalist organizations , and were later sent to labor camps in Siberia and elsewhere , where they would not be released until after Stalin 's death .

= = = Revival under Khrushchev = = =

Following the power struggle after Stalin 's death in 1953 , Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the country 's new leader . In a secret speech he gave in 1956 , Khrushchev denounced Stalin and his domestic policies largely loosened the government 's grip over the country . Khrushchev put more resources into the production of consumer goods and housing . Almost immediately , Armenia underwent a cultural and economic rebirth . Religious freedom , to a limited degree , was granted to Armenia when Catholicos Vazgen I assumed the duties of his office in 1955 . One of Khrushchev 's advisers and close friends , Armenian Politburo member Anastas Mikoyan , urged Armenians to reaffirm their national identity . In 1954 , he gave a speech in Yerevan where he encouraged them to republish the works of writers such as Raffi and Charents . The massive statue of Stalin that towered over Yerevan was pulled down from its pedestal by troops literally overnight and replaced in 1962 with that of Mother Armenia . Contacts between Armenia and the Diaspora were revived , and Armenians from abroad began to visit the republic more frequently .

Many Armenians rose to prominence during this era , including one of Khrushchev 's friends , Mikoyan , who was the older brother of the designer and co @-@ founder of the Soviet MiG fighter jet company , Artem Mikoyan . Other famed Soviet Armenians included composer Aram Khachaturyan , who wrote the ballets Spartacus and Gayane that featured the well known " Sabre Dance , " the noted astrophysicist and astronomer Viktor Hambardzumyan , and popular literary figures Paruyr Sevak , Sero Khanzadryan , Hovhannes Shiraz , and Silva Kaputikyan .

= = = Brezhnev = = =

After Leonid Brezhnev assumed power in 1964 , much of Khrushchev 's reforms were reversed . The Brezhnev era began a new state of stagnation , and saw a decline in both the quality and quantity of products in the Soviet Union . Armenia was severely affected by these policies , as was to be demonstrated several years later in the catastrophic earthquake that hit Spitak . Material allocated to the building of new homes , such as cement and concrete , was diverted for other uses . Bribery and a lack of oversight saw the construction of shoddily built and weakly supported apartment buildings . When the earthquake hit on the morning of December 7 , 1988 , the houses and apartments least able to resist collapse were those built during the Brezhnev years . Ironically , the older the dwellings , the better they withstood the quake .

Though the Soviet state remained ever wary of the resurgence of Armenian nationalism , it did not impose the sort of restrictions as were seen during Stalin 's time . On April 24 , 1965 , thousands of Armenians demonstrated in the streets of Yerevan during the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide . Soviet troops entered the city and attempted to restore order . To prevent this from happening again , the Kremlin agreed to have a memorial built in honor of those who perished during the atrocities . In November 1967 , the memorial ( designed by the architects Kalashian and

Mkrtchyan ) was completed at the Tsitsernakaberd hill above the Hrazdan gorge in Yerevan . The 44 @-@ meter stele symbolizes the national rebirth of the Armenians . Twelve slabs are positioned in a circle , representing twelve lost provinces in present @-@ day Turkey . In the center of the circle , in depth of 1 @.@ 5 meters , there is an eternal flame . A 100 @-@ meter wall around the memorial 's park contains the names of towns and villages where massacres are known to have taken place . Monuments in honor of other important events in Armenian history , such as that commemorating the battles of Sardarapat and Bash Abaran , were also permitted to be erected , as was the sculpting of the statues of popular Armenian figures like the fifth @-@ century military commander Vardan Mamikonian and the folk hero Sasuntsi David .

= = = The Gorbachev era = = =

Mikhail Gorbachev 's introduction of the policies of glasnost and perestroika in the 1980s also fueled Armenian visions of a better life under Soviet rule . The Hamshenis who were deported by Stalin to Kazakhstan began petitioning for the government to move them to the Armenian SSR . This move was denied by the Soviet government because of fears that the Muslim Hamshenis might spark ethnic conflicts with their Christian Armenian cousins . However , another event that occurred during this time made an ethnic clash between Christian Armenians and Muslims inevitable .

Armenians in the region of Nagorno @-@ Karabakh , which was promised to Armenia by the Bolsheviks but transferred to the Azerbaijan SSR by Stalin , began a movement to unite the area with Armenia . The majority Armenian population expressed concern about the forced " Azerification " of the region . On February 20 , 1988 , the Supreme Soviet of the Nagorno @-@ Karabakh Autonomous Oblast voted to unify with Armenia . Demonstrations took place in Yerevan showing support for the Karabakh Armenians . Azerbaijani authorities encouraged counter demonstrations . However , these soon broke down into violence against Armenians in the city of Sumgait . Soon , ethnic rioting broke out between Armenians and Azeris , preventing a solid unification from taking place . A formal petition written to Gorbachev and senior leaders in Moscow asked for the unification of the enclave with Armenia , but the claim was rejected in the spring of 1988 . Until then , the Soviet leader had been viewed favorably by Armenians , but following his refusal to alter his stance on the issue , Gorbachev 's standing among Armenians deteriorated sharply .

= = Independence = =

Tension between central and local government heightened in the final years of the Soviet Union 's existence . On May 5 , 1990 , the New Armenian Army ( NAA ) , a defense force envisioned to serve as a separate entity from the Soviet Union 's military , was created . A celebration was planned for May 28 , the anniversary of the creation of the first Armenian republic . However , on May 27 hostilities broke out between the NAA and the MVD troops based in Yerevan , resulting in the deaths of five Armenians in a shootout at the railway station . Witnesses claimed that the MVD had used an excessive amount of force in the firefight and insisted that it had instigated the fighting . Further firefights between Armenian militiamen and the MVD in nearby Sovetashen ( now Nubarashen ) resulted in the deaths of twenty @-@ seven people and an indefinite cancellation of the May 28 celebration .

On March 17 , 1991 , Armenia , along with the Baltics , Georgia and Moldova , boycotted a union @-@ wide referendum in which 78 % of all voters voted for the retention of the Soviet Union in a reformed form . On August 23 , 1991 , Armenia became one of the first republics to declare independence from the Soviet Union . Armenia 's desire to break away from the Soviet Union largely stemmed from Moscow 's intransigence on Karabakh , mishandling of the earthquake relief effort , and the shortcomings of the Soviet economy .

On September 21 , 1991 , Armenia declared its independence . Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan continued to escalate , ultimately leading to the outbreak of the Nagorno @-@ Karabakh War . Despite a cease @-@ fire in place since 1994 , Armenia has yet to resolve its conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno @-@ Karabakh . The country , however , has seen substantial

development since independence , moving away from a planned economy to a privatized one and adopting a representative democratic system of government . Armenia remains blockaded by both Turkey and Azerbaijan over the Karabakh dispute . It maintains friendly relations with its neighboring states of Georgia and Iran and is a strategic ally of Russia .

On July 5 , 1995 , the new constitution of the Republic of Armenia was adopted .

= = Government = =

The structure of government in the Armenian SSR was identical to that of the other Soviet republics . The highest political body of the republic was the Armenian Supreme Soviet , which included the highest judicial branch of the republic , the supreme court . Members of the Supreme Soviet served for a term of five years , whereas regional deputies served for two and a half years . All officials holding office were mandated to be members of the Communist Party and sessions were convened in the Supreme Soviet building in Yerevan .

= = Economy = =

Under the Soviet system , the centralized economy of the republic banned private ownership of income producing property . Beginning in the late 1920s , privately owned farms in Armenia were collectivized and placed under the directive of the state , although this was often met with active resistance by the peasantry . During the same time ( 1929 ? 1936 ) , the government also began the process of industrialization in Armenia . By 1935 , the gross product of agriculture was 132 % of that of 1928 and the gross product of industry was 650 % to that of 1928 . The economic revolution of the 1930s , however , came at a great cost : it broke up the traditional peasant family and village institution and forced many living in the rural countryside to settle in urban areas . Private enterprise came to a virtual end as it was effectively brought under government control .

= = Culture and life = =

With the establishment of the Republic , Soviet authorities worked tenaciously to eliminate certain elements in society , in whole or in part , such as nationalism and religion , to strengthen the cohesiveness of the Union . In the eyes of early Soviet policymakers , Armenians , along with Russians , Ukrainians , Belarusians , Georgians , Germans , and Jews were deemed " advanced " ( as opposed to " backward " ) peoples , and were grouped together with Western nationalities . The Caucasus and particularly Armenia were recognized by academic scholars and in Soviet textbooks as the " oldest civilisation on the territory " of the Soviet Union .

At first , Armenia was not impacted significantly by the policies set forth by Lenin 's government . Prior to his debilitating illness , Lenin encouraged the policy of Korenizatsiya or " nativization " in the republics which essentially called for the different nationalities of the Soviet Union to " administer their republics " , establishing native @-@ language schools , newspapers , and theaters . In Armenia , the Soviet government ruled that all illiterate citizens up to the age of fifty to attend school and learn to read Armenian , which became the official language of the republic . The number of Armenian @-@ language newspapers ( Sovetakan Hayastan ) , magazines ( Garun ) , and journals ( Sovetakan Grakanutyun , Patma @-@ Banasirakan Handes ) grew . An institute for culture and history was created in 1921 in Echmiatsin , the Yerevan Opera Theater and a dramatic theater in Yerevan were built and established in the 1920s and 1930s , the Matenadaran , a facility to house ancient and medieval manuscripts was erected in 1959 , important historical studies were prepared by a new cadre of Soviet @-@ trained scholars , and popular works in the fields of art and literature were produced by such luminaries as Martiros Saryan , Avetik Isahakian and Yeghishe Charents , who all adhered to the socialist dictum of creating works " national in form , socialist in content . " The first Armenian film studio , Armenkino , released the first fiction film , Namus ( Honor ) in 1925 and the first sound film Pepo , both directed by Hamo Bek @-@ Nazarov .

Like all the other republics of the Soviet Union , Armenia had its own flag and coat of arms .

According to Nikita Khrushchev , the latter became a source of dispute between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Turkey in the 1950s , when Turkey objected to the inclusion of Mount Ararat , which holds a deep symbolic importance for Armenians but is located on Turkish territory , in the coat of arms . Turkey felt that the presence of such an image implied Soviet designs on Turkish territory . Khrushchev retorted by asking , " Why do you have a moon depicted on your flag ? After all , the moon doesn 't belong to Turkey , not even half the moon ... Do you want to take over the whole universe ? " Turkey dropped the issue after this .