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Georgia – Russia: History of Conflict
(Episodes of Abkhazeti and Tskhinvali regions)

Preface.

Georgian identity and national culture (which incorporates centralized but tolerant state) have been formed in the course of the centuries-old struggle against various Invaders. Historically some of them succeeded in their pursuit of fragmenting or partially annexing Georgia; during such times Georgian church remained to be the guarantor of integrity of the state established by the Georgians, and the Georgian nation never tolerated aggressors. Over the recent period Georgia's major challenges included deoccupation of the Russian-occupied territories of Georgia – Abkhazeti and Tskhinvali regions, return of refugees previously deported from these territories, establishing civil peace and defending rights of Abkhazeti and Tskhinvali population.

Today the whole world actively follows the ongoing processes in Caucasus; therefore, the prospects of revival for Georgian democratic state and restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity are more realistic now (comparing to 20th century). Therefore, providing Georgian population as well as international society with the historical documents and unbiased researches appears to have vital importance, this will promote better understanding of the nature of Georgian-Russian conflict and the revival of peaceful co-existence during the post-conflict period.

Introduction.

Any person has a right to know the linguistic-ethnic history of his/her own country, though individuals who reside in the countries established by other indigenous ethnicity not always have unbiased knowledge about their own roots (for instance, Laz living in Turkey).

The process of unbiased teaching is complicated by the fact that the history of each nation is created in multiple versions; namely, history is developed by chroniclers, fair as well as unfair annalists within the given country's state structures, and historians with differing opinions. In addition, distant past has its imprint on the nation's memory as the cycle of stories is passed on to progeny from one generation to another in the form of legends-fragments... The past is possible to revive as a part of myths and epic, documentary sources or archeological data.

As a rule, different analyses of historical facts are due to differing frames of reference as well as motivation of the opposing sides. Under the modern communication conditions it is possible to produce the reliable fact-based history that will bridge the gap between the conflicting sides as much as possible.

Search for truth is hindered by politicization of science that, indeed, is carried out due to the will of imperial states. During the last 80 years when the scientific scholarship witnessed tremendous development in the whole world, unfortunately, the history of life, culture and language of Georgian nation was mainly written in accordance with the Soviet empire scheme; for instance, the hypothesis on interrelationship between Georgian and ancient Anterior Asian cultures, the relativity theory of Iberian-Caucasian languages cherished by Ivane Javakhishvili and Arnold Chikobava, etc. due to some reasons have been regarded as less promising. Instead, Russian-Georgian "friendly" co-existence has been excessively covered in a subjective manner and intensity; according to the ideology of the Russian Empire (disintegration of the nation – the owner of the territory in question!), "oppressed" nations have been offered "written languages" on the basis of Georgian dialects that were considered as unwritten languages. Besides, Georgians have been regarded as a combination of several

independent nations, namely, Georgians, Khevsurs, Tushs, Svans, Laz, Megrels, Acharans, Meskhs, etc.

G. Melikishvili's reasoning in terms of politicization of science is interesting:

"National self-consciousness of Georgians was strengthened by the end of 19th century; during the very period a new scientific theory by F. Homel was published, according to which ancestors of Georgians were regarded to be the Proto-Indo-European population extending over Caucasus, Near East and a large part of Europe – "Alarodian family of the peoples": the Elamites, the Kassites, the Urartians (Georgian are their descendants), Pelazgians, Etruscans, Basques, etc. F. Homel's scientific theory reinforced the consolidation of Georgians but at the same time the leaders of the Russian Empire as well as the powerful Armenian bourgeoisie existing in Transcaucasia became antagonistically inclined towards the Georgians..." (G. Melikishvili, Essays, I, p. 329).

Such a substantially typical attitude ("divide and rule") towards interpreting Georgian history is still in progress in Russia and in certain foreign circles as well (cf. see, for instance, the studies of Y. Koryakov, G. Hewitt, I. Zeirek, W. Feurstein, etc.). External forces still attempt to declare Laz, Megrels and Svans as Linguistic-ethnic minorities and thus separate them from extensive literary culture (I believe, due to the lack of scientific information some individuals involuntarily cause such linguistic diversion, see, for instance, <http://vlib.iue.it/history/asia/georgia.html>).

The Russian empire's objective is still the same: gradual occupation and annexion of Georgian territory by disorientating international society as well as Georgian citizens, and at the same time total assimilation of Georgians – the owners of the territory by means of linguistic-ethnic disintegration.

The objective of Georgian nation, in general, Georgian population is also the same: rescue national identity and culture by saving our own statehood. In today's globalistic world such an objective could be implemented only if a new, depoliticized, modern methodology-based, academic history of Georgia is created. **One of the integral parts of such history is regarded to be a documentary record of the 200-year conflict.**

For over the last 200 years Russian Empire has been attempting to annex Georgia (/Caucasus); Since 1801 Russia has commenced military intervention by

violently abolishing Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom; Russia declared termination of almost a 100-year war as far back as 1864. (Though the bloody war continued for the next 100 years and even today it continues in the form of several episodes; for instance, Russia-Georgia war in 1991-2009 and Russia-Chechnya war in 1993-2009).

Since 1864 Russian Empire has been striving to totally destroy Georgian (Caucasian) national consciousness and divide Georgian nation into separate ethnoses. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917 when Russian Empire was temporarily broken up the given period of Georgian history came to an end.

In 1918-20 Georgian nation struggled for the revival of its statehood but by the beginning of 1921 the Russian Bolshevik empire again violently abolished the newly-revived Georgian state and carried out its occupation and annexation.

Georgia's struggle for independence did not stop: in 1980s the geopolitical battles between the West and the Russian Empire (the Soviet Union) degraded. Given the circumstances, the national independence movement in Georgia gained strength and came into power under the leadership of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in a legitimate manner– via multiparty elections held on October 28, 1990. The National government passed a declaration of independence on April 9, 1991 and **assigned the occupant status to the military forces of the Soviet Empire.**

Again, at the beginning of 1992 Russian Empire violently deposed the Georgian legitimate government, returned Georgia to the Russian sphere of influence and **immediately annexed Abkhazeti and Tskhinvali region.**

Since the Rose Revolution in 2003 Georgia's exit from this sphere of influence has started again; the process was finalized in August 2008 when **the occupant status of Russian troops was restored and Georgia withdrew from the CIS.**

Today 20% of the Georgian territory – Abkhazeti, Tskhinvali region, Akhalkalaki region and a part of Samegrelo region – is still annexed by Russia. Total deoccupation of Georgia substantially depends on patriotism of the Georgian civil society and the support from the civilized world. Both factors could be successfully defined by objective understanding of the ongoing conflicts on the territory of Georgia.

Periodization of History of the Georgian nation.

Occupation of a small country by an empire is regarded a manifestation of **aggressive globalization**. History confirms that physical and genetic destruction of a people is almost impossible: linguistic-cultural (conscious) assimilation - a “cultural” form of aggression is the biggest danger for a nation.

The history of the Georgian nation offers a good example of the optimistic struggle for preservation of national-cultural identity (national self-identity), although the Georgian nation has lost much of its territories.

Strategically significant Caucasus is a constant object of interest for major players in the big geopolitical games. Due to Georgia’s geopolitical strength within Transcaucasia, some of the great empires having good neighborhood relations with Georgia managed to maintain control over Caucasus (or Caucasian passes), others tried to annex the region by exterminating the autochthon population.

The history and the present of the Georgian nation is rather a struggle for survival. Georgia survived multiple offensives. I believe, repelling Russian Empire appeared to be the most difficult attempt due to the fact that it **simultaneously applied** (and continues to do so) **two main forms of aggression**: annexation of the empty territory after a physical destruction (genocide) or resettlement of the autochthon population (Georgians) and, at the same time, forced exposure of the local population to the Russian language (instead of their mother tongue), causing assimilation and destroying their consciousness.

The linguistic–ethnic history of Georgia originates from the ancient Caucasian - Anterior Asian civilizations (for the history of the issue, see T. Putkaradze, Georgians, Pre-Christian Era, 2005). The process of formation of the Kura-Araxes culture, extending over a great part of the Caucasus and Anterior Asia is assumed to be the next proto-historic period of the Kartvelian-Caucasian peoples.

It seems logical that the Colchian culture existing in millennia before the Common Era descended from the people having the common Kartvelian language and it covered the territory that included: the Black Sea area from

Pitiunt (Bichvinta) to Sinop, part of Anatolia, the gorges of the rivers Rioni, Kvirila, Chorokhi and the upper course of the Mtkvari (up to Mtskheta) as well as Tskhinvali and Qoban regions. Supposedly, the oldest Georgian kingdoms of Colcha and Diaochi existed within this cultural context.

Georgian chroniclers start their record of individual kings by mentioning the history of Georgian Kings — Azo and Parnavaz (4th-3rd cc. BCE). Exactly from this period the “Aea (Aia) - Colchis, rich in gold”, well-known to the Greeks, has revived again as a unified state with its major center in Mtskheta by common efforts of King Parnavaz and Eristavi Quji of Egrisi.

From the turn of our era it is easier to represent particular episodes of the political as well as linguistic-cultural history of Georgians. The hypothetical historical chain of the Georgian nation from the ancient period to the present day will assume the following form:

Proto-Kartvelian era – **5th–3rd millennia BCE;**

Period of Cholchian (common Kartvelian) culture – **from the mid-2nd millennium BCE to the mid-1st millennium BCE;**

Revival of All Georgia as Kartli of Azo, Parnavaz and Quji – **2nd half of 1st millennium BCE;**

From adoption of Christianity to the assassination of Gorgasali – **4th–5th cc. AD;**

From the Arab rule to regeneration of new Georgia - **7th – 9th cc. AD;**

David the Builder and Tamar – Georgia’s Golden Age – **11th –12th cc. AD;**

Period from Giorgi-Lasha to Giorgi the Brilliant **13th –14th cc. AD;**

Period of Persian and Turkish domination – division of Georgia into small provinces each of which considered itself to be Georgia – **15th –18th cc. AD;**

Period of the Tsarist Russian Empire: 1801-1917;

Period of the first Republic: 1918-1921;

Soviet occupation period: 1921-1990;

Period of deoccupation of Georgia and approximation with Europe – 1992–to the present period.

Review of the 200-year Georgian-Russian conflict Georgia from the Ancient era to 1801.

In the 5th–3rd millennia BCE Caucasus and Transcaucasia were settled by the Caucasian-Hurrian-Hattic tribes having a language with an ergative construction. Generally, the Kura-Araxes culture is linked to the Caucasian-Hurrian population.

In the 3rd millennium BCE “the people having a language with an ergative construction” began to diverge rapidly under the pressure of the Indo-European and other tribes.

From the end of the 2nd millennium BCE to the turn of our era the historical territory of Georgia was inhabited by the Kartvelian (speaking Kartvelian dialects) tribes such as: The Mushki/Moskhoi/Meskhs, Daiaenians/Diauehian/Taokhoi, the Colles, Tibareni, the Iberians/Sasperoi, the Kuts/Koits/Kvits, the Coraxi, the Marae, the Becheiroi, the Halizoni/Chalybes, the Chalds/Khalds, the Mossynoeci, the Dizeres, the Zidrites, the Macrones/Macrocephaloi, the Phasians, the Melanchlainoi, the inhabitants of Ekriktike/Ekecheiroi, the Heniochi, the Sannoi/Chans, the Sanigoï/Sanikoi, the Laz, the Apkhazes, Abaskoi, Apsars, the Svans/Misimians, the Suanno-Colchians, the Amarantoi (a Colchian tribe), the Tusks, the Kakhs, Kukhs, Tskhums, the Pkhovians, the Hers, etc.

The Kartvelian race inhabiting the gorges of the Halys, the Mtkvari, the Chorokhi, the Rioni-Qvirila, the Enguri and the Liakhvi, together with some kindred tribes living in North Caucasus, actively created the Colchian-Qoban culture from the end of the 2nd millennium BCE; supposedly, the principal language of the state of people – creators of the Colchian culture was the common Kartvelian Koine/language.

The historical literary language – the language of the ecclesiastical writing (the so-called Old Georgian language) is based on the common Kartvelian linguistic koine; modern versions of the Georgian literary language and Kartvelian dialects (Laz-Megrelian, Svan, Meskhian, Kartlian-Kakhetian, Rachian, Her, Pkhovian, etc.) are the direct continuation of common Kartvelian and the historical literary language.

The analysis of the onomastic material which found its way from Kartvelian into the languages of the neighboring peoples, Kartvelian borrowings and so-

called dated toponyms provide a basis for arguing that the modern Kartvelian languages and dialects (literary Georgian, Megrelian-Laz, Svan, Pkhovian, Meskhan and other dialects) originated at the turn of our millennium.

The key function of the state of Georgians that originated from the 1st millennium BCE was defined to be the control over the strategic passes of Caucasus Mountains. As Pliny the Elder stated: “the Caucasian Gate divides the world into two parts”...

During 1st -15th centuries the following countries aimed at dominating Georgia: Persia, Byzantium, Arabia, Mongolia, Turkey, etc. Georgia survived invasions by great empires and at the same time created great culture.

Constant aggression by Persia and the Ottoman Empire during 16th –18th centuries made Georgia to look for the allies in Western Europe; though Europe, excited about the discovery of America while searching for the way to India, did not wish to confront the powerful Eastern empires for the sake of Georgia.

At the beginning Russia, on the ground of the same religion, attempted to gain Georgia’s confidence and thus establish itself in Caucasus (see documentary material of the King of Kakheti’s ambassadors, 1483).

Russian Empire emerged in the “geopolitical field” in order to gain control over Caucasus in 16th century (after capturing Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan by Ivan the Terrible). Russian troops first entered Georgia in 1561 as a military support of the “friendly country” (on the basis of permission by Levan – the King of Kakheti), though Russia avoided confrontation with Iran as well as the Ottoman Empire and left Transcaucasia; moreover, in 1564 Russia withdraw its forces also from North Caucasus.

On September 28, 1587 Alexander the king of Kakheti received “the Book of Pledge” and in 1589 Tsar Feodor of Russia sent “Charter” to Georgia (Kakheti). “These acts dated 1587-1589 represent the first official agreement between Russia and Georgia (N. Asatiani, History of Georgia, 2001, p.260). Close relations between Kakheti and Russia enraged Iran and caused several invasions carried out by Shah Abbas.

From 1601 (revolt in Kakheti) to 1883 Iran gained actual control over Eastern Georgia.

On the turn of 17th –18th centuries Russia under Peter I still took interest in Caucasus (see Artem Volinky's report to the Emperor); First of all he attempted to oust the Ottomans from Azov and obtain the way to the Black Sea. In the mid-18th century Russia involved in the war against Prussia, left Caucasus avoiding annoyance of the Ottomans. In 1768 Solomon I of Imereti (Western Georgia), involved in the war against Ottomans, offered partnership to Russia; the Russo-Turkish war started the same year ending with the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji in 1774 (one of the provisions of the Treaty applied to Georgia).

On July 24, 1783 the so-called Treaty of Georgievsk was signed at the fortress of Georgievsk; this drew protest from both Ottoman Empire and Iran; Muslim khanates carried out frequent violent attacks against Georgian kingdoms-principalities, and during September 8-11, 1795 Aga Muhammad Khan, a new leader of Iran, destroyed the troops of Erekle II who had been abandoned by the Russian army.

At the end of 18th century both Ottoman Empire and Iran simultaneously attacked Georgia that had been separated into several principalities. Russia, sharing common religion, continued devastation of Georgia by ignoring the Treaty of Georgievsk in 1801 and abolishing Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom by the military operation and absorbing this part of Georgia. (See Manifests of January 18 and September 12, 1801); later Russian Empire annexed Western Georgia as well (cf.: historical Meskheta became a part of Turkey).

Iran, one of the three major geopolitical players lost ground in Caucasus.

Documentary material:

The text of the secret letter by **Count Nikita Panin** – the chancellor of the Russian Empire, dated July 16, 1770, says:

“you must act in Georgia so that the inhabitants have Russian soul and Georgian body”.

cf., The “Treaty on the Unity of the Iberians (Iverians).”

Georgia in 1802-1864: Partial Annexation of Georgia and Caucasus.

In 1803 the government of the Russian Empire drew up an agreement, similar to the “Treaty of Georgievsk”, with the Odishi principality; the very

agreement was in fact abrogated in 1857 when Princess of Samegrelo, Ekaterine Dadiani was exiled to Russia (Odishi principality was legally abolished in 1867).

In 1808 the similar agreement was drawn up between the Russian Empire and the Imereti Kingdom; though in 1810 Russia dissolved the agreement and abolished Imereti Kingdom.

On July 30, 1811 the Mtskheta throne of Catholicos was abolished – the rank of Catholicos-Patriarch was substituted by that of the exarch and the Georgian Church illegally turned under rule of the Russian Church (a century later the autocephaly was restored).

Russia annexed Svaneti Principality and Tsebelda as well as Samurzakano in 1834 and 1837 respectively.

In 1864 Russian Empire abolished Apkhazeti principality; in the summer that year the last points of Caucasian resistance - Akhchipsou and Pskhu were conquered by Russia. The occupants annihilated large part of local population (Apkhaz, Ubykh, etc.), the other part was exiled to Turkey (that fundamentally altered demography of the Black Sea region) officially declaring that the occupation of Caucasus came to an end (in fact, bloody war in Caucasus is still in progress).

Documentary material: in 1810 A. Tormasov, the General, Commander-in-Chief of the Georgia-based Russian army wrote about Western Georgia to the Russian Emperor Alexander I: “by dividing this quite extensive area into four possessions such as Imereti, Guria, Samegrelo and Apkhazeti ... it would be easy to keep the territory by the units located there, especially when there will be an opportunity, in case of necessity, to provoke confrontation between the principal” (R. Lominadze, 2000, p. 128).

Documentary material: see Also: Apkhazeti (Essays in the History of Georgia), 2007, pp. 250-252.

Georgia in 1865-1917: linguistic-ethnological imperial diversions

In 1864 Russian Empire declared the end of the 100-year war in Caucasus. Since then Russia has intensified the second form of aggression: in order to alter “demographic pattern” significantly, the officials of Russian Empire started to eliminate national identity of Georgians in the first place by means of falsification of linguistic-ethnological qualifications. For that purpose Russia had been

prepared in advance; in terms of these events, the report by the staff captain Shakhovsky to G. Rozen, the Viceroy to the Tsar, dated 1834, is of particular interest:

"It would be the most advantageous for us if we, by the way, introduce Russian liturgy [in Svaneti], that would make these people depend on you. For that purpose I regard it necessary to teach theology in Russian to a few children of the Svan priests, ordain them and send them to their people, who will welcome them and their fathers will make way for them on their own will".

Since 1860s the Russian Empire has been intensively attempting to establish Russian language in Georgia; at the same time having an objective to limit the use of Georgian in Apkhazeti, Samegrelo and Svaneti the Russian officials activate Russian language, and the official documents are issued in Megrelian dialect ("language") as well.

In this regard, there are "unique" Laws, dated January 27, 1867, by Michael, the Viceroy, General-Feldzeichmeister, the representative of Russian Tsar in Caucasia, "regarding obtaining a right by peasants who are no longer serfs in Samegrelo (in Zugdidi, Senaki and Lechkhumi uyezd) ... signed by: Chief Director, Viceroy of Caucasia, Senator, State Secretary Baron A. Nikolai". Cf., the Megrelian version:

"regarding those rights of peasants who are no longer serfs, living in Samegrelo (Zugdidi, Senaki and Lechkhumi uyezds) ... signed by: Chief Director, Viceroy of Caucasia, Senator, State Secretary Baron A. Nikolai".

Cf., also:

Al. Gren, an author of the Megrelian alphabet-handbook, published in 1899, says in the preface: "while compiling this alphabet I was, by any means, aiming at giving rise to national resistance of Megrels who are being suppressed by the stronger Georgian people. Such a resistance is absolutely impossible without having an alphabet, [the one] that would enable the Megrels to express themselves similarly as their enemies, in this case – Georgians" (S. Khundadze, 1940, p.104)

In terms of ideology, a secret letter, dated 1900, by Military governor of Kutaisi province, Major General Gershelman is also interesting,: "by the order №2771, March 17, 1898, of the Georgian-Imeretian synodal office teaching Georgian language is absolutely prohibited at schools in Apkhazeti and Samurzakano ..."; by this document Russians considered Samurzakano (Gali!)

Megrels as representatives of a different nation having a different “language” and contrasted them with the rest of the Georgians (E. Dadiani, T. Putkaradze, R. Sherozia, “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” and Georgia”, 2009, pp.21-39).

The actions of those like Ianovski, Vostorgov and Ashordia were adequately confronted by population, clergy and intelligentsia of all regions of Georgia.

Documentary material: **Tedo Sakhokia (what are you chasing after?!):**

"... The reader must be already acquainted with publications in press that concern the autonomists' weakness, their betrayal and evil intentions. I as a Georgian and an inhabitant of Samegrelo, cannot avoid giving voice to collective resentment, and would like to express my indignation regarding such parvenu behavior of Samegrelo's “protectors”.

Samegrelo, as an integral part of Georgia, shared all its life with Georgians, has dealt with all the difficulties life had offered and has created the unified culture together with Georgians, and now, as the centuries passed, someone such a creep comes and suggests to tear itself away from its mother!

How is that? How can “sovereignty of Georgia” suppress Samegrelo that is tenderly cared by all Georgia? How anyone dare to say in the twentieth century that the Megrelian and the Georgian languages are different?! Is Megrelian, having almost one hundred percent of Georgian roots, a different language? The Megrelian represents a supplement to modern Georgian. The Megrelian language is mostly spoken within a family, but the Megrelian as a specific characteristic of a nation has never existed. In any case, since Christ Samegrelo has contributed to the Georgian culture with the best experts of the Georgian language. Not to mention several figures, it is enough to refer to the remarkable preacher Anton Chkondideli and T. Zhordania, a historian of Georgia and the compiler of the Georgian Grammar.

“Megrelian Autonomists” know well about these things. Though they assume the role of defenders of “Megrelian proletariat” and try to convince others in Megrels as a different nation.

It is even blameworthy to argue on this absolute truth... We would like to show the real reason behind it - why such a truth has become so debatable.

It is well known that the issue of the Megrelian language did not exist before the Russian dominion. It has become a problem since the Russians have moved to Georgia. When different Georgian principalities have been abolished and different parts of our country have unified, the Russians felt the danger of such unification and they decided to divide our country in an unnatural manner. The 1870s the schools of Samegrelo were attacked. Here at schools of the Ministry the Georgian language was prohibited and the school subjects were taught directly in Russian - used as a language of instruction. This was the case for the “public” and “normal” schools. The pupils of these schools stealthily studied to read and write in Georgian, or as they used to call “čkinobura” (i.e. “peculiar to ours”).

That is how russification of Samegrelo was carried out until 1890. Since the very date starts the “argumented” denial of the Georgian languages as a mother language with the help of which, according to the requirements of the rational pedagogics, the youth of Samegrelo was supposed to be educated. From this moment the actors include Ivanovskiy (of Polish origin), an education guardian of Caucasus district and his right hand, Levitsky (of Polish origin). First, Levitsky introduced the so-called “mute” method in schools which aimed at learning Russian without help of the books in order to totally avoid Georgian at the Georgian schools. Our blessed teacher – Iakob Gogebashvili fiercely opposed the “Mute” method by Levitsky that did not succeed and was not exercised in Eastern Georgia.

The case was quite different in Imereti where Levitsky was appointed as a province inspector. The attack was especially carried out against the schools in Samegrelo. They took advantage of the Megrelian language which by uncaredful consideration might seem a different language. Of course, for persons like Levitsky it was not beneficial to recognize that such a difference was only external and that the Georgian language, as a literary language and as a mother tongue should have a leading role in the Schools of Samegrelo.

Levitsky made Petrov – the Khoni Seminary teacher compile a separate alphabet for Megrelians, of course in Russian letters, and made him write down the folk tales as well as poetry of Megrelians with the assistance of the “well-known” Tada Ashordia who worked at the same seminary. This work had to be used as a text-book at the Megrelian schools. T. Ashordia has been offered a good position and financial support. He has been charged with an important mission – to promote status of the Russian language by banning the Georgian language in schools of Zugdidi uyezd.

Ashordia was assisted by some agents and their work flourished; the Megrelian school became a place hindering the development of children. The government’s twofold aim has been achieved: Georgian has been banned at the Ministry schools in Samegrelo and the process of russification for Samegrelo’s population has started.

Parochial schools in Samegrelo were the only places where Georgian language remained functional. The reason was the status of Georgian as a language of liturgy; as the schools within the parish were affiliated to the churches the language of instruction had to be Georgian. At some point the ecclesiastic authority won a fierce struggle against the Ministry department; though that did not last long. Levitsky decided to find another solution to the problem. He assigned a new task to the same Ashordia, namely the latter, similar to Giorgi Mtatsmindeli, had to “translate” Gospels from Georgian into Megrelian. In Levitsky’s opinion, this could give results in unrooting the Georgian language at parochial schools. But the whole region of Samegrelo opposed such profanity and actions, and the public outcry was expressed in the well-grounded report by Grigol, then-Bishop of Guria-Samegrelo. The very report included a skillful discussion by Niko (Great) Dadiani, the patriot representative of Samegrelo, where he argued regarding invalidity of such intention. Grigol’s report was based on another report of bishop Besarion, who, as a Megrelian, had been asked to present his opinion on translating the Gospel into Megrelian. T. Zhordania, the

historian, the member of the committee selected by bishop Besarion, offered a well grounded critique of such foolish and unnecessary experiment.

The report by bishop Grigol stopped the translators of Gospel into Megrelian, and therefore the Georgian language remained in Megrelian schools as a language of instruction.

Although, archpriest Iv. Vostorgov has been appointed as a supervisor of parochial schools within the exarchate of Georgia. At present, the issue of education in the ecclesiastic authority of Georgia is dealt with by an executioner in cassock and a murderer of our souls, Herod for our youth, a careerist and the best implementer of the Russian tyrannical government's russification politics. Betrayal, denunciation and treachery developed among the teachers.

The activities of archpriest Vostorgov have been especially difficult for Samegrelo. He used to claim that Megrels had nothing to do with Georgians and they were not supposed to be taught in Georgian at their schools; instead he demanded to introduce Russian, the state language. Moreover, this politician in cassock dared to publish his arguments in press. The reader must remember the answer of Professor, Academician N. Marr. He fiercely criticized the politician archpriest who had absolutely no competence in the field.

Afterwards, the Georgian language has been attacked from a different angle. The government used to appoint Russian bishops in the Sokhumi eparchy. These bishops and especially Arseni passed an order on the use of the Russian language in liturgical practices in Samurzakano and Apkhazeti in general. The ecclesiastical authority in Sokhumi, with the support of gendarmerie, persecuted anyone who dared to express the wish of the parish by insisting on Georgian as a language of liturgy. Who knows how many families were affected.

The revolution of 1905 contributed to slowing down diligence of those supporters of russification. Following revolution the same forces continued their activities. In 1918 the Megrels volunteered in Poti on Stephane Gagua's (a teacher) initiative to continue the Levitsky-Vostorgov's struggle; though we never took it serious until the commencement of preparations for the autonomy in Zugdidi. The "Mapaluians" group even sent the following request to Moscow: "Please, save us from sovereignty of Georgia, do not let Megrelian proletariat to decline and do unite it with the Russian proletariat.

Let me cite the Megrelian proverb at the end: "a greyhound is chasing after a rabbit, but what is the rabbit chasing after?"

We all know what those like Levitsky and Vostorgov were chasing after but what are you, "autonomists" of Samegrelo", chasing after?!"

Georgia in 1918-21

In 1918-20, during those three years of the restored independence of Georgia the Empire's pressure on the linguistic-ethnic identity of Georgians decreased and the rights of Georgian language restored. At the same time, Georgian government showed traditional Georgian tolerance to the linguistic

rights of minorities, which meant that the citizens of other nationalities could address the supreme legislative body in their own languages, and the delegate elected to the Georgian parliament in 1918-1921 could make a speech in his own language if it was understood by at least one member of the presidium. The status of Abkhazeti – incorporated into Georgia – has been defined as autonomous, etc.

In 1918-1921 numerous legal documents were elaborated for the revival of independent Georgia.

Documentary material:

Georgia in 1922-1990

Russian imperial politics continued in a much aggressive manner following Bolshevik annexion of Georgia in 1921.

The empire of Lenin and later, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev attempted not only to fragment Georgia's territory but also to estrange certain groups of Georgians from their Kartvelian history, culture and a unified linguistic identity. Stalin and other Bolsheviks knew well that estrangement from the nation's mother tongue by means of "linguistic diversions" (**declaring dialects as independent languages**) is the highest priority while disintegrating a nation. It is significant that the current Russian Empire (Russia of Putin-Medvedev-Dugin) applies much more sophisticated methods in order to achieve a century-old goal – gaining everlasting control in Caucasus by disintegrating the Georgian nation.

"Linguistic diversions" were carried out with extreme intensity in 1930s in Georgia (though, at present even bigger risk factors occur). This was one of the most difficult periods in the entire history of the Georgian nation:

After the repeated Russian annexion of Georgia an extensive social-political terror occurred. While the Tsarist Russia used its generals, clergy (those like Ivanovskiy, Vostorgov, Gershelman, etc.) and a few local renegates (like Ashordia) in order to disintegrate Georgians, the Bolshevik's tactic was much more

treacherous: aggressors with slogans on democracy and social equality strived to achieve their goal with the help of the local Bolsheviks-communists.

The strategic plan was the same:

The process of setting Apkhazs, Ossetians, Armenians, Azeris, etc. against Georgians continued in parallel with the systematic linguistic-ethnic disintegration. Just as the Tsar's officials, Bolsheviks have stated that Megreles, Acharans, Svans, Laz, Imeretians, Khevsurs, Tushs, etc. were not Georgians and that they had been oppressed by the Georgians. The following detail is worth mentioning:

They implanted in the minds of the Apkhaz people that the Georgians had been their historical enemies capturing and inhabiting their land, hindering development of Apkhazian culture and wishing to destroy the Apkhaz nation; some Apkhazs believed in such false statements. Though, that was Georgian intelligentsia that was trying to stop genocide... even today, Georgians can stop destruction of the Apkhaz people carried out by Russia and, in general, total annexion of Caucasus.

Russian Empire proceeded with the same "divide and rule" principle in Samegrelo; though another tactic plan had been brought into the foreground; for instance, during the "Sovietization" period Russians could not make the Megrelian Bolsheviks act like Apkhazs, therefore another "ideological" background has been discovered: the Tsarist Russia's (Patkanian-Ianovskiy-Ashordia-Vostorgov) well-developed theme – "protect the oppressed Megrelian language" – has become urgent; the Bolshevik leader of the very "movement" was Isak Zhvania, the first secretary of Zugdidi raikom of the USSR communist party.

In 1925 Zugdidi party committee discussed the issue and the same year a meeting of the central committee presidium of Georgia's communist party of (Kakhiani, Okujava, Eliava, Gegechkori, and Orjonikidze) passed a resolution regarding introduction of Megrelian as a language of instruction in Megrelian schools as well as courts, and the publication of the Megrelian newspaper. In 1928 the central committee's instructor from Moscow, Pshenitsin, visited Megrelian villages and concluded the following: "We must provide the Megrelian

peasants with school, court and popular edition in their mother tongue". On March 25, 1929 the secretary of central committee, Dadiani passed a resolution regarding restoration of the Megrelian language's privileges in schools, court procedures and investigation process. In accordance with this resolution, clerical work and court procedures should be implemented in Megrelian language at locations where the majority of population did not know (!) the Georgian language"... (I. Zhvania, 1931, p. 147).

It is typical that in provision I and II of the resolution Georgian and Megrelian languages are juxtaposed; provision IV indicates that resolutions as well as orders are to be published both in state language and the Megrelian language.

Developing such linguistic politics was impossible without Russian government's, namely Stalin's permission (or instruction). Since the 18th century the Russian imperial machine has been put in motion and kept working; though the actual negative roles have been performed by others (Bolsheviks such as Philipe Makharadze, Isak Zhvania, Mamanti Kvirtia, etc.).

Since the sinister decision, dated 1929, I. Zhvania and his partners have been offered a discretionary authority. Magazines and Newspapers have been published in Megrelian word forms. In 1931 I. Zhvania's book was published – "The struggle of Samegrelo's peasantry for the Soviet rule". The leaders of the Empire regarded this book as of great significance which was witnessed by the circulation of 30 thousand copies.

During the 6-year period (1929-1934) the Bolshevik "linguistic diversion" was intensively carried out in Samegrelo. In 1934 the similar publications discontinued; the government of the Empire dismissed Isak Zhvania who became subject to repression.

It is well-known that since mid-1930s Stalin had attempted to acquaint the world with the great past of his birth place – Georgia, genius of Rustaveli etc. At the same time, in 1937 in his letter to Stalin, L. Beria, the leader of the Georgian government "resented" the fact that the scientist of the Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology were "confused" and "contradicted each other on their conclusions" (in the first version of the letter he mentioned them as impregnated with the "velikoderzhav" spirit) (Archive Newsletter ("Saarqivo Moambe"), VI,

2009, p.116, the periodical of the Archive Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia).

The issue concerns the division of Georgia into several nations based on the censuses of 1926 and 1937 by the all-USSR academic circles. Namely, in 1926 the Academy of Russia (i.e. USSR) divided Georgians into: the Georgians (the Kartvels, the Kakhetians, the Tushs, the Pshav-Khevsurian, the Armenians, the Javakhs, the Meskhs, the Klarjs, the Taoans, the Acharans, the Gurians, the Imeretians, the Rachians, the Lechkhumians), the Megrels, the Chans, the Svans, the Batsbs.

Though in 1937, according to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, the list included: the Georgians, the Megrels, the Laz, the Svans, the Batsbs, and the Acharans.

The same year the Institute of Anthropology has compiled its own version that later served as a basis for the "Nationality Dictionary". Here the Georgians are considered of as follows: the Megrels, the Laz, the Svans and the Batsbs, though the Acharans are mentioned as a separate nation. L. Beria was acquainted with all materials but emphasized the issue of the Acharans, he urged Stalin to interfere and avoid such a mistake in the "Nationality Dictionary", because such a division contradicted the Leader's opinion on a nation.

Since 1970s the derangement of Georgian identity has been planned by the Russian Empire with a new intensity. On April 14, 1978 the Soviet Empire attempted to abolish the already secondary status of the Georgian language as a state language of the Georgian Republic. Russia's plans were even "more ambitious"; the following excerpt represents a fragment of Mikhael Suslov's (1902-1982) report published in the magazine of Paris National Council ("Georgia the Warrior"]):

"The communist party is a glue and while it maintains its properties we have to proceed with the rescue plan of Russia which must differ in different republics.

The Generals residing in the Far East must be offered normal living conditions. In order for them to settle down we need the frontier territory of the Black Sea that is where the Georgians live. We should take into consideration the fact that Georgian differ from us greatly and sooner or later they will bring up an issue of independence and demand freedom. We must commence the struggle from Apkhazeti. By taking advantage

of Apkhazeti we must give independence to Samegrelo, Svaneti, Achara and other regions. We have to stir up the regional-national sentiments in each of the regions individually. Western Georgia should be set against Eastern Georgia and we must perform our function of arbitrator. At the same time we should scientifically convince Georgians that they are migrants from different countries and belong to different nations, this will give us an opportunity to get rid of them from the territory of Georgia”.

Georgia in 1991: Act of declaration of Independence of Georgia

April 9, 1989 represents a threshold of a new phase of the national-liberation movement in Georgia which ended in multi-party, democratic and non-Soviet elections on October 28, 1990. The national forces that came to power via elections (block: "The Round Table-Free Georgia") revived Independence of the state and **assigned the occupant status** to the military forces of Russia.

Legal Georgian authority devoted special attention towards preservation the Apkhazs linguistic-cultural identity and the issue of establishment of state structures in the Autonomous Republic. National government was devoted to the issue of integration of Ossetes and other ethnic groups inhabiting Georgia. Unfortunately, the Russian propagandist machine falsified the internal politics of the national authorities and with the assistance of the Georgian renegates accused Georgians of the acts of vandalism carried out by Russians (for instance, Georgians shot in the Georgian villages in the vicinities of Tskhinvali were declared to be Ossetes, etc.).

On March 31, 1991 the legal government of Georgia held a referendum and on April 9 declared the revival of Independence of the Georgian Republic. Russia realized that Zviad Gamsakhurdia's government was an obstacle in the way of maintaining control over Caucasus.

In autumn 1991 Russia started to stage a coup against the government that had introduced a status of occupants for the Russian troops and had been striving for independence (Unfortunately, at that time the West's objectives included elimination of Russia's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, including the Baltic states; Caucasus, Ukraine, Moldova and Central Asia remained within the Russia's sphere of influence).

In accordance with the Kremlin instructions, the Georgian putschists prepared and implemented the plan of a coup against the Georgian government (the very fact is confirmed by the confessions of Irakli Batiashvili, Jaba Ioseliani, etc. published as books and interviews).

Georgia in 1992-2008

In 1991 Russia did not reconcile itself to the prospect of leaving Georgia. Despite the fact of the successful referendum and declaration of the Act of Independence, Georgia was forced to remain within the Russian geopolitical area during 1991-1993 (see a discussion in T. Putkaradze “What God wills not, or about the ongoing processes”, Newspaper “Georgian Republic”, September 28, 1991).

On the turn of 1991-1992 Russia changed the legal government in Georgia; Russia also implemented a coup against the legal governments of Azerbaijan and Ichkeria, the countries that Russia considered to be within the sphere of its influence (it is noteworthy that up to the present day some forces try to hush up the fact and designate a coup performed under the guidance of the Kremlin as a “civil war”).

By **provoking conflicts in Apkhazeti and Tskinali regions** in 1992-1993 the most part of the autochthon population (Georgians, the Apkhazs and the Ossetes that opposed the Kremlin, etc.) were banished by the Russian troops from historically Georgian land.

Despite, Shevardnadze’s government annulled the occupant status to the Russian troops; moreover, the occupant was declared as **“a friendly country”** and the **Russian troops**, in fact the so-called Georgian-“Apkhazian”/“Georgian-Ossetian” troops, **were assigned a task of a peacekeeping mission within the area of the Georgia-Russian conflict.**

Since 1993 the new phase of the Russian expansion has started in the Caucasus: following the genocide and a coup against the legal government, it was time to activate the Russian capital: **the strategic capabilities of Georgia**, located on the occupied and annexed territories, **are mostly acquired by Russia.**

Today the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan and The Baku–Tbilisi–Batumi lines are of vital importance for the West. Liberation of the Eastern Europe was rather a dignity as well as a safety issue for America and the Western European countries, while the **Central Asian resources** and the **Transcaucasian energy carriers** are of the

vital significance both for the West and Turkey: only after the Russia's withdrawal from Transcaucasia will Europe become independent in terms of energetics.

Soon after 10 years of Shevardnadze's rule these and other factors required the necessity to regulate **geopolitical balance** in Transcaucasia:

By supporting the "Rose Revolution" in 2003 the west significantly strengthened Euro-Atlantic orientation forces in Georgia; as a result, the role of the Georgian government as a geopolitical player has been enhanced; this contributed to Russia's striving for regaining the control over Transcaucasia; **the results** are obvious: aggression in August 2008– **the next stage of the Russian revanche.**

Due to the active involvement of the United States and Europe, the Russian Aggression was stopped in the vicinities of the capital Tbilisi; this historical event gave numerous negative and some positive results for Georgia:

Many citizens of Georgia (Georgian or Ossetian) fell in battle, thousand of Georgians became refugees; Georgia lost territories (Dali/Kodori gorge or upper Apkhazeti, Akhagori region, Georgian villages in Tskhinvali region, village of Perevi in Sachkhere region, etc.); state of Georgia weakened; the military potential of the country was heavily affected; probability that the Georgian state might be fragmented by means of Russian-controlled "separatist" forces has increased. Besides, by acknowledging independence of Apkhazeti and South Ossetia, the real threat emerged on the possibility for North Caucasus to become the forpost of chaos, terrorism and radical Islam.

Revival of the **occupant status** for the Russian troops and **intensification of the European Union activities** in Transcaucasia are regarded to be positive and **objective results.**

Georgia Since 2009

Since Russian-Georgian war in August (2008) the **Kremlin has been controlling** larger territory than it did before the war. Though it is insufficient for Russia of Putin-Medvedev-Dugin; the aggressive Russian government strives towards control of not only Transcaucasia but also the entire Eurasia. Also, in

order to completely isolate Georgia, Russia actively works in terms of the relationships of Russia-Armenia-Iran and Russia-Azerbaijan-Armenia-Turkey; **multiple geopolitical vectors intersect** within the region complicating the prospect of Georgia's pro-Western course.

The key problem of Georgia is still unsolved: deoccupation of the occupied territory is something for the future. Moreover, if the civilized world continues to ignore increasing tendency of Russia's geopolitical ambitions, a total occupation and annexation of Georgia by Russia is still to expect in the nearest future.

For the purpose of defining the future prospect of the country let us trace the last 200-year geopolitical history of Georgia:

In 1801-1917, 1921-1990 Russia has established illegal and unopposed **geopolitical control** in Transcaucasia and at present it cannot adapt to the circumstances that involve new major geopolitical players in the region.

For more than two centuries Georgian nation has been striving for good neighborly relations with Russian people, but the present government of Russia aims at realizing its **geopolitical ambitions** by illegitimate means at the expense of Georgia.

Population of Georgia will never accept violation of its vital interests. Russia is aware of this, therefore it constantly attempts to substantially modify **the demographic situation in Georgia** and forever establish itself in Caucasus by **manipulating demographic capabilities**; namely:

- In 19th-21th centuries first by the so-called Muhajirism and then by the Russian-Georgian 1992-2008 war Russia carried out the **genocide of** the Georgians and the **anti-Russian Apkhazs** in the historically Georgian region – Apkhazeti.

Russia first established the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia in artificial borders; and now it is attempting to complete this process by creating a Satellite

state where pro-Russian Apkhazs, Armenian migrants and Russian new settlers will live, rather than the Georgians – the majority of population – who have been exiled from Apkhazeti.

- In 20th–21th centuries the Russia succeeded in its effort to settle its supporter Ossetes from Ossetia (North Caucasus) into Shida Qartli – Tskhinvali-Java regions, who illegitimately and illogically were first offered the so-called “South Ossetian autonomy”; and on such an artificial formation Russia is trying to carry out grafting of Kokoity’s Russian-speaking “State”. For the history of the issue I would briefly state that both in the Soviet period and at the present time even in the so-called nominal North Ossetian Autonomous republic – a real Ossetia – the Kremlin is destroying the Ossetian language and culture; for instance, there is no opportunity to get a general or higher education in Ossetia, neither is the prospect of revival-development of the Ossetian culture; Russification policy is being actively implemented in Ossetia. Besides, the Beslan tragedy confirms the fact that, similar to the Chechens and Ingushs, the Kremlin is carrying out also the Ossetian genocide (for the extensive discussion on the linguistic policy of Russia see M. Tabidze, Linguistic Situation in Georgia and Issues on Functioning of Georgian Language, Tbilisi, 2005; T. Gvantseladze, Issues in language and dialect in Kartvelology, 2006).

- for the last 150 years, the politicized linguists, ethnologist and historians falsify the real linguistic-cultural and ethnic-political history by the order of the Russian imperial government, thus attempting **to declare the large part of Georgians and their historical motherland as non-Georgians and non-Georgian territories respectively. In order to achieve the very goal the Russian Empire carries out its work in three directions:**

1. By engaging in propaganda for pseudoscientific tenets Russia is striving to alter the national identity of at least some part of the Georgians; **for instance**, some Russian-financed individuals make efforts, though unsuccessfully, to convince Svans that they are not Georgians, and their language is not Georgian.

2. By using powerful propaganda, Russia tries to convince the world that the Acharans, the Megrels, the Laz, the Svans, the Khevsurs, the Meskhs, the Tushs,

etc. do not belong to Georgians. According to the Russian data, these “**ethnic groups**” are being “**oppressed**” by **Georgians (Kartvels)** in the State called Georgia, due to the fact that **their literary culture is not based on their own mother languages**. The language of Georgians – the “oppressors” is imposed on these peoples by means of “Kartvelization”, and the world must support these “oppressed ethnoses”.

3. With “**scholarly studies**” of **dubious value**, they try to persuade the world’s elite circles that **there is no unified Georgian culture**; that Georgia is a small empire; that in the past Georgians (Kartvels) conquered and to the present day continue “to oppress the peoples having unwritten languages”: Meskhs, Acharans, Megreles, Laz, Svans, etc.

After creating such a background, with the aid of the Russian-financed political forces, they wish to give autonomy to Georgian regions and divide Georgia by the so-called federation-confederation method.

In a word, with the inadequate terminological evaluation of the events and distortion of the essence of facts, Russia tries to convince the whole world that Georgia is “a small empire” which must be broken down and that the Georgian “aggressors” oppress other “undeveloped ethnic groups”, etc.

Unfortunately, 19 years have passed after the revival of Independence of Georgia on April 9, 1991 but the Georgian government could not succeed in removing the imperial linguistic ethnological “mines” up to the present day; moreover, at present Georgia is losing more information wars than ever. Today, Europeans those like Hewitt or Feurstein who enjoy “Q'azaxiši gazeti” (Peasant’s Newspaper) and are supported by grants deceive the world as though the areal of the Georgian language does not include regions such as: Samegrelo, Svaneti, Lazeti, Imerkhevi, Tskhinvali region, Apkhazeti and as though the Megreles, the Laz, the Meskhs, the Svans, etc. are not Georgian. For instance,

<http://linguarium.iling-ran.ru/maps/14-kartv.gif>;

http://www.armazi.com/georgian/unicode/the_kartvelian_languages.htm;

<http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/didact/karten/kauk/kaukasm.htm>)...

Sadly, some of the Georgian or foreign scientists of our generation who enjoy “grants” do not mind such politicized qualifications.

I believe academic, politicized descriptions and qualifications of the linguistic-ethnic situation of Georgia should be of major importance in the process of integration of Georgia in the civilized world. If the international information field will not become free of the Russian imperial definitions and qualifications (which, mechanically, following the soviet “scientists” still dominate the international information network), the territorial integrity as well as Georgian identity will face insuperable obstacles.

Moreover, if the civilized world continues to ignore increasing tendency of Russia's geopolitical ambitions, a total occupation and annexation of Georgia by Russia is still to expect in the nearest future.