

# **History**

---

*Alasania Giuli*

*The University of Georgia, Georgia*

## **Tbilisi in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

*After the annexation of Georgia by Russia in the early 19th century the term “Sakartvelo” (Georgia) disappeared. The country split into two parts: Tbilisi government (eastern Georgia) and Kutaisi government (western Georgia). Unification of the country was a challenge for the Georgians dwelling inside and outside Georgia. The term “Sakartvelo” emerged once again in times of the independent Republic of Georgia (1918-1921).*

*The present paper considers the history of Tbilisi which was traditionally a political, administrative and cultural center of united Georgia, of eastern Georgia, of Caucasus, of the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia until 1936), of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia (1936-1991) and Georgia (after proclaiming independence) and reflected all changing political contexts.*

*The following issues are introduced: the process of urbanization, the demographic situation and the migration processes, as well as coexistence in the multicultural and multi-religious milieu. Along with the constructing activities, industrial, cultural and educational achievements within the frames of the USSR, the violation of human rights, restriction of the Georgian language, the Georgian church, purges, reprisals, civil unrest, nepotism, corruption, the protests of opposition and the suppression of these protests, and consequently the bleeding of the nation throughout the 20th century which is still in place, are studied.*

*Keywords: Georgia, Russia, Trans-Caucasia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Democracy, urbanization, migration, 20 century.*

Tbilisi entered the 20th century as the center of Tbilisi province - one of the major administrative units of Russia and the residence of the Governor-General of the Caucasus. Along with its political-administrative function, Tbilisi also played a cultural and educational role, thus shaping both the political and cultural life of the region.

At that time the world seemed to be a peaceful place. However, peace is not simply the absence of war. Europe had already been divided into opposing camps and the irreconcilable differences, which later led to World War I, were already obvious. The reasons that pitted these countries against each other are well-known. The main goals, namely to establish a new world order and re-distribute power were achieved to some extent.

In 1901, Tbilisi celebrated the new century and the 100-year anniversary of becoming a part of Russia; however not everyone shared this “joy”.

The advent of the new century made the population of Tbilisi forget their countless problems, the legacy of the preceding century only temporarily. It was a time when the name “Sakartvelo” (Georgia) was almost forgotten. The country was divided into provinces - Tbilisi province, Kutaisi province, etc. Georgians, both at home and abroad, dreamed of uniting these provinces into one country. However, only a few brave souls dared to speak about the political independence of the country. Political powers still tried to revert to the *Georgievsk Treaty*, which partially conceded the independence of the country and gave up the church’s autocephaly.

While the Kutaisi province was fully populated by ethnic Georgians, they accounted for only three fifths of the population in Tbilisi province. In the second half of the 19th century, the population started to move from West Georgia to East Georgia. This significantly increased the population of Tbilisi. In 1865, according to official sources, there were 11 cities in Georgia. These were: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Akhaltsikhe, Gori, Dusheti, Akhalkalaki, Sokhumi, Telavi, Signaghi, Poti and Ozurgeti (Jaoshvili, 1984. pp. 106-107). In 1878, after the end of the Russian–Turkish war, Batumi was also included in the list of cities. More than half of Georgia’s urban population lived in Tbilisi (Jaoshvili, 1984. p.107).

The growth of Tbilisi’s population in the 19th century, according to the calculation of I. D. Anchabadze and N. G. Volkova (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1990):

1811 – 8.2 thousand

1825 – 19.7 thousand

1864 – 60.1 thousand

1876 – 104.1 thousand

1897 – 168.8 thousand

1902 – 189.3 thousand (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1990, p. 24)

Ethnic indicators for 1899 based on the research of the same authors (absolute and percentage):

Armenians 63.0 thousand – 36.4%;

Georgians 44.9 thousand – 26.0%;

Russians 35.5 thousand – 21.1%;

Persians 6.1 thousand – 3.5 %;

Poles 4.6 thousand – 2.6%;

“Tatars” 3.0 thousand – 1.7%;

Germans 2.9 thousand -1.6%;

Ossetians 2.0 thousand – 1.6%;

Jews 2.4 thousand – 1.4%;

Assyrians 1.6 thousand – 0.9 %;

Greeks 1.0 thousand – 0.5%;

French 0.4 thousand – 0.2%;

Kurds 0.5 thousand – 0.2%;

Lezgians 0.4 thousand – 0.2%;

Turks 0.3 thousand – 0.1%;

Chechens 0.4 thousand – 0.2%;

Others 3.3 thousand -1.9% (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1990, p. 29).

The total population amounted to 172.6 thousand.

According to the data provided by V. Jaoshvili, the increase of Tbilisi population after the reform is set forth here: 1865 -71051, 1886 – 144822, 1897 – 159631, 1914 – 344629 (Jaoshvili, 1984, p. 108).

In the ethnically diverse city, different religious confessions coexisted peacefully as in old times. In 19th-century Tbilisi, there were four major religious groups – the Orthodox, the Armenian-Gregorian, the Muslim, and the Catholic. According to the 1897 census, the Orthodox population totaled 83.7 thousand (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, p. 42.) and based on the same census the Armenian-Gregorian population amounted to 50.5 thousand ((Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, p. 45). Muslims were represented in a

relatively small number – 7.4 thousand (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, p. 46), consisting mainly of Shia Muslims. During the 19th-20th cc., this number increased at the expense of the Sunni Muslims, most of which were Tatars from Kazan. According to the same census, despite the persecution of Catholicism and the suppression of their activities in 1845, there were 7 thousand Catholics in Tbilisi (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, p. 47). There also were Lutheran Evangelists (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, pp. 49-50), Judaists; alongside Georgian Jews, Jews from Kurdistan (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, p. 51) also lived in Tbilisi. The city had 2.3 thousand sectarians: Molokans, Staroobryádsy, Dukhobors, Baptists and others. With the arrival of Yazidi Kurds, a new religious confession was established in 20th century Tbilisi.

Each group had its own church, where they celebrated different traditions and customs and passed them on from generation to generation.

In 1825, there were 12 Georgian, 4 Russian and 2 Greek churches in the city; in 1899 due to an increase in the Orthodox population, the number reached 48 (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, p. 44). Sometimes different ethnic groups went to the same church; one of them was the Sioni Church of the Virgin Mary, which was destroyed and renovated many times (*Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar* was the last one to destroy the church).

In 1825 there were 25 Armenian-Gregorian churches in Tbilisi; 30 years later there were 27 churches and one monastery (Anchabadze, Volkova, 1980, p. 45).

In 1864 the city had Sunni as well as Shia mosques. The majority of the Catholics were Armenians who went to church along with other Catholics, and had their priest. For other Catholics three Capuchin fathers performed the service.

In 1882 the viceroyalty, established in 1845, was abolished and once again governor-general was appointed.

According to the data of 1886, the Georgian language dominated in ethnically diverse Tbilisi; it was named the mother tongue not only by Georgians, but by some other ethnic groups as well. Russian was spoken only by a small number of the population, mainly the high and wealthy society. Quite a lot of people spoke several languages other than Russian, including French, German, Persian, English and Latin, to name a few.

By 1911, the area of the city increased to 2589 desyatinas (desyatina=1.09 hectare). There were 1120 streets, 23 squares, with cobblestones and partial asphalt as well as pavements made of stone. The city had 17 thousand residential stone houses, 77 de-

syatina gardens, squares and boulevards, more than 4000 street lights (electrical, gas, kerosene), 22 cemeteries and 4 main markets – “Avlabari”, “Saldatski”, “Meydani” and “Vera” markets, 23 secondary schools (9 female and 14 male), 1 night school, 9 libraries, 3 reading rooms, 280 factories and plants (where 4431 workers were employed), theatres, scientific societies, printing-houses, newspaper and magazine publishing-houses, 420 canteens, 4 stables and two prisons.

According to R. Gachechiladze’s research, in 1913 there were higher courses for women (private), 6 male and 5 female gymnasiums, all in all there were 150 different schools in the city. Most of the Caucasian newspapers were published in Tbilisi; 19 - in Russian, 10 - in Armenian, 6 - in Georgian, 2 - in Azerbaijani and 1 - in German languages; the city had 5 theatre halls, 8 movie theatres, 10 hospitals, about 20 pharmacies, 37 hotels, many branches of banks and insurance companies, 10 libraries, 46 - Orthodox, 22 Armenian - Gregorian, 1 - Catholic and 1 -Lutheran church, 2 synagogues and 2 mosques (Gachechiladze, 2008, p. 71). There were also organizations dedicated to education: “The *Society* for the *Spreading* of Literacy among Georgians,” “The Union of Russian Women,” “The Society for Spreading Suitable Literacy among Armenians in Tiflis province.” Georgian society “Ganatleba” (“Education”), “The Society for Setting up Public Readings in Tbilisi” and others.

The establishment of the university as well as technical and agricultural institutes was on the agenda. Tbilisi self-government spent on average 450 thousand roubles on education. 100 thousand roubles and 200 desyatina land were allocated for the university, but the permission to open even a Russian university encountered obstacles. In 1906, the construction of the Georgian Nobility Gymnasium was completed. Later, in January 26, 1918, at the time when Georgia was already independent from Russia as a part of Transcaucasia, although it was not a sovereign state yet, Tbilisi State University was founded; it was housed in the Nobility Gymnasium building.

In 1883 the first horse driven rail (the so-called “konka”) was constructed from the railway station to Vorontsov Square (Meskhia, Gvritishvili, Dumbadze & Surguladze, 1958, p. 501). In 1887, there were 520 carriage drivers (mephaetone) in the city. But at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, they had competitors and traditional transportation gave way to the novelties of the new era: 7-line horse-driven rail, (“konka”) appeared in the center of the city and in 1904 an electric tram appeared, too. From 1905 a Belgian company built a cable car line – funicular, which carried passengers up to Mtatsminda (holy mountain). Soon the first cars appeared in the city. A telephone system was launched. By that time, there were 10 bridges over the river Mtkvari, 6 of them were made of steel (Didi Vera, Mikheil Bridge, Vorontsov Bridge, etc.) and 4 of wood.

Old Tbilisi was still the industrial center of the city. Due to the sewage system, water vendors (metulukhches) were advised to stop their activities, but they continued their work as the need for their service was still in demand for quite a long time. The water distribution system provided about 700 thousand buckets of water per day, however some districts still used water from the Mtkvari River, and a part of Tbilisi already had a sewage system.

Small manufacturing business was dominant in the city, however the number of factories and plants gradually increased. This, in turn, started to destroy medieval traditions, according to which people were employed based on their ethnicity. At the beginning of the century these old traditions were partially preserved.

Previously dominant industries such as cattle breeding and farming gradually gave way to manufacturing, but they did not disappear; and based on 1887 data, gardens and kitchen gardens occupied 400 desyatina of land in Tbilisi, of which 276 desyatina were occupied by private owners. Irrigation canals were being built in the city.

The majority of Tbilisi's workforce was under qualified. These workers mainly came from the Western part of Georgia. The city was famous for its locally made clothes; however, the share of imports was quite high. Ready-to-wear clothes as well as shoes were imported.

Tbilisi was famous for its Ashugs (Ashiks) - public singers, ring masters, clowns and jokers, kintos and Tbilisi street hawkers (karachoghelis). Different types of competitions were held in the city, for example, Ortachala hosted horse racing; they often held concerts too. Famous singers and performers frequently visited the city. Tbilisi often hosted professional ballet and opera performances.

On November 16, 1896, Tbilisi residents saw films made by Lumière Brothers as the first movie theatre opened in the city. In 1908-10, the foundation was laid for national cinematography and the first cameramen, V. Amashukeli and A. Dighmelov, started to work in the field. V. Amashukeli, already a famous cameraman, presented a documentary movie in 1912 named "The Voyage of Akaki Tsereteli to *Racha-Lechkhumi*", making a significant contribution to the development of the fledgling art form. The population of Tbilisi attended dance evenings, organized charity events, etc. It should be noted that charities were often based on ethnic affinity: Persian Charity Society, Armenian Women's Charity Society and others. In 1910 a Gorgijanov Theatre "Variété" was opened in the Mushtaidi Garden.

At the beginning of the century, Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli and Vazha Pshavela walked the streets of Tbilisi. In 1907, 1911, 1915 these titans of Georgia left the historical stage and appealed to the Georgian people to love their country and devote their life to their “Homeland, Language, Faith”.

Russia met the beginning of the century with serious political and economic challenges. The great empire faced multiple failures. From 1905 to 1918 the territory of Russia was being reduced. Their defeat in the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-1905 was followed by a severe internal political crisis. The social situation was extremely tough. As a part of the Russian Empire Georgia not only reflected the events occurring in the center, but also got involved in the process, thus becoming an active participant in history.

Two parallel directions were traced from the very beginning in Georgia. One of them was the labor movement, which was international in its character and had a nihilistic attitude towards national feelings. In parallel to it, the national movement, which had quite a long track record and had never ceased in Georgia, was intensifying. In March 1903 RSDLP the Caucasian Union was established in Tbilisi and very soon a newspaper named “The Fight of the Proletariat” was published in Georgian and Armenian languages. In January 1905 peaceful labor demonstrators were fired upon in St. Petersburg. This event was followed by a mass demonstration in Tbilisi as well, but all in all the proletarian movement could not find a strong foundation in Georgia, particularly in Tbilisi. Along with people fighting for social equality, the number of the people who saw the future of Georgia in its political independence gradually increased.

In 1904, the founding convention of the Socialist-Federalist *party* was held. The main goal of the party was to obtain political autonomy for Georgia. In 1905 Governor General of the Caucasus - Count Illarion Ivanovich Vorontsov-Dashkov arrived in Tbilisi (1905-1915). The count was known for his Armenophilic attitude and did not approve of the aspiration of the Georgian church for independence, let alone the restoration of the political independence of the country, which was a long-aspired goal in Tbilisi. Vorontsov-Dashkov stayed in Tbilisi until 1915, and was replaced by the uncle of the Tsar, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich Romanov.

In 1914, the World War broke out and Russia got involved. The situation created during the period of WWI and the position of the Bolsheviks led to the overthrow of the Tsar. Even without the telegram that was received, people in Tbilisi knew quite well that “Mtavrobadze<sup>1</sup> had passed away.” In February a provisional government was created.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Mtavroba* means the government, but Mtavrobadze could be a last name.

During that period Tbilisi was the center of the South Caucasian political movement. Georgia tried to survive with minimum losses and Georgians took an active part in the events. During World War I, a large portion of the population left the cities; as a result, in 1914-1917 the populations of Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi significantly decreased.

At that time the question of restoring the autocephaly of the Georgian Church, which was abolished by Russia in 1811, was still on the agenda. A Georgian noblemen's letter addressed to the Russian Emperor dated October 11, 1905, reads: "During the centuries the Georgians moaned under the inexorable yoke of the rules of the Eastern countries. They endured cruelty. Nevertheless, the Iveri Church was invincible and viable, its spirit was powerful and its strength unconquerable... Now the Georgian Orthodox Church should be given a free life and the legal authorities should take their positions again and the Catholicos elected by the people should be restored in his rights and responsibilities..." (Alasania, 2010, p. 52) The long-standing struggle only got resolved on March 12, 1917 when Russia approved the announced restoration of the autocephaly of the church in the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. However, based on the decision of the Russian provisional government, autocephaly was restored according to ethnicity, not territory (Phyletism). Non-Georgian churches remained under Russian rule (Alasania, 2010, p. 53). After the restoration of autocephaly, Tbilisi became the residence of the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia.

It is not accidental that those years proved to be a significant time of change in the the history of Georgian culture. In 1916, the Society of Georgian Painters was formed. It was managed by Dimitri Shevardnadze and David Guramishvili. In 1916, Alexander Tsutsunava screened the first Georgian feature film called "Christine". In the same year, the magazine "Tsisperqantselebi" ("Blue Horns") was published, finally establishing the school of Georgian symbolists whose distinguished representatives were: P. Iashvili, T. Tabidze, E. Gaprindashvili, G. Leonidze, K. Nadiradze, S. Tsirekidze, S. Kldiashvili, Sh. Apkhaidze, R. Gvetadze, N. Mitsishvili, and others.

On May 2, 1917 the meeting of the arts council of the musical school decided to establish the Conservatoire, the founding of which had been on the agenda for many years. On October 5, 1917 the founding meeting of all Georgian writers was held and May 7 was declared the Day of Poetry. In those years D. Kldiashvili, V. Barnovi, E. Gabashvili, S. Mgaloblishvili, D. Megreli, K. Maqashvili, A. Abasheli, G. Tabidze, S. Shanshiashvili were famous public figures. In the same year, the Caucasian Historical Archeological Institute, led by N. Marr and Ekvtime Takaishvili, was established. This was the first scientific research institution in the Russian Empire. The institute laid a foundation for scientific research in the field of history which was preceded by a his-



torical and ethnographical society established by Ekvtime Takaishvili in 1907.

World War I and the Turkish invasion once again presented the different interests and positions of the people of Transcaucasia. The Armenian National Bureau was created in Tbilisi. The bureau had to do its best to gain victory in the war, and the Mayor of Tbilisi, Alexander Khatsov, received 245,000 roubles from the Russian government to form armed forces aimed at confronting the Turks (Suny, 1994, pp. 178-9).

The local and provisional government - a special committee of Transcaucasia established in Tbilisi, which included Kita Abashidze and Social-Democrat Akaki Chkenkeli as the representatives of Georgia (Guruli, Vachnadze, Shvelidze, Kirtadze, Tsotskoulauri, & Firanishvili, 2003, p. 46) - turned out to be very short-lived, as the October Socialist Revolution established the Congress of Soviets as the sole governing body.

The 1917 October Revolution changed the situation in Tbilisi and the political forces faced a stark choice. On November 15, 1917, “The Transcaucasian Commissariat” was formed in Tbilisi. This was a temporary body. Evgeni Gegechkori was elected as its chairman. In late November of the same year, the Georgian National Convention convened in Tbilisi. The Convention elected the Georgian National Council and recognized the unity of Transcaucasia, but it demanded to have extensive power, in particular, the power to form the Georgian Autonomous Republic equipped with broad rights and authority.

On January 5, 1918, based on the Decree of the Central Executive Committee of the Councils, after rebuffing the Russian founding meeting, the National Democratic Party requested to convene the inaugural meeting for the independence of Georgia. In 1918, without summoning the Transcaucasian delegates, Bolshevik Russia entered a separatist treaty with Germany and its allies in Brest-Litovsk, according to which it conceded quite a large territory in Transcaucasia, including a part of the Georgian territory. Transcaucasia did not recognize the treaty. The war with Turkey was on-going leaving Georgia in serious peril. Along with the Dashnaks and Musavats, the Social-Democrats convened the Transcaucasian Seym (Parliament) in Tbilisi, which issued an Act of Independence of Transcaucasia on April 22, 1918 (Surguladze, A. Surguladze, 1991, pp. 193-194). However, due to the apparent conflict between the parties’ interests, the Seym could not achieve success in its negotiations with Turkey. At that time, Georgia had a chance to receive help from Germany, and it took advantage of this opportunity. After the breakdown of the Seym, on May 26, 1918, Georgian Mensheviks created their government in the same hall of the Government House and announced the birth of the Independent Republic of Georgia. Tbilisi was declared the capital of the Repub-

lic. It so happened that the governments of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Republics were established in Tbilisi. Along with Georgia, they also declared their independence. During the years of independence Tbilisi was governed by the city self-government – the municipality. Election censorship and suppression was abolished and the universal right to vote was introduced.

In 1918, the Parliament of Georgia issued a law on the citizenship of Georgia and elaborated a new rule for city elections. From then on, only Georgian citizens were granted the right to take part in the elections. The law proved to be unacceptable for the Dashnaks and SR's, and the situation in the Assembly became tense.

During the years of independence, a territorial dispute developed between the neighbors. During negotiations on the disputed issues, the Armenian army invaded the territory of Georgia in December, 1918. As a result, the territory of Lori was proclaimed neutral and was finally conceded by Georgia. The national council was dismissed and the parliament elected, which had to be replaced by the founding congregation. According to new elections held on February 2, 1919, where over 60% of the population participated, among them 51% of Tbilisi residents (35366), the majority were Social-Democrats; the number of National-Democrats, Socialist-Federalists and other minor parties and groups was less than 10.

During the short period of independence, great success was achieved in different fields, but these years were especially significant in terms of creating a precedent for the independence of the Georgian state, gaining the experience of managing a republic, and adopting the First Georgian Constitution. If, in 1919, Tbilisi had 137 factories employing 5202 workers, in 1920 the number increased to 475 enterprises with 10,800 employees. Georgian opera traditions that had existed in Tbilisi from the mid-19th century were restored when in 1919 Dimitri Arakishvili's opera "The Legend of Shota Rustaveli" and Zacharia Paliashvili's opera "Abesalom and Eteri" were staged. Tbilisi State University, established earlier (on January 26, 1918), never stopped functioning, even in times of war, different tense political and social situations. It was the first university in the Caucasus. The language of instruction at the newborn university was Georgian. The university survived the loss of independence and continued its existence under the Bolshevik regime, in the Georgian Soviet Republic and reflected all the political changes which took place along the time. It was the center of educational and cultural life. It not only reacted and responded to social and political events, but it also generated ideas, being a real leader in higher education, science, culture, political life and the national movement. The university gave birth to all the other higher schools that later emerged in Georgia.

In 1918 the self-taught painter Niko Pirosmani died in Tbilisi. His unique art became the trademark of Georgia and was closely connected with Tbilisi. The old generation of Georgian painters – G. Gabashvili, A. Mrevlishvili, M. Toidze, D. Guramishvili, I. Nikoladze worked together with L. Gudiashvili, D. Kakabadze and others. The latter two went to Paris to continue their studies in the city where E. Akhvlediani, K. Maghlashvili and Sh. Kikodze mastered their art as well.

In 1920, the Ministry of Public Education selected 75 youngsters to be sent to Europe for education.

In the same year, the National Art Gallery was created in Tbilisi. Based on the gallery, the Georgian State Museum was established a little later. In 1920-21 Rustaveli State Theatre was founded and located in the best building on Rustaveli Avenue.

The greatest achievement of these years was the adoption of the Constitution (February 21, 1921) which never came into effect.

The Socialist-Democratic government of Georgia started to implement the imperative of the age that aimed at speeding up secularization. On July 17, 1920, the church council convened in Tbilisi and discussed several issues. Among them were the division of Church and State, the transfer of the church schools to the Ministry of Education, the church budget, as well as the unification of Mtskheta-Tbilisi eparchies and the living conditions of the clergy.

The new world order established after World War I could not ensure the preservation of Georgian independence. On December 16, 1920, Georgia was not admitted to the League of Nations by the majority of votes. A decision was made to consider the issue at a later date, but this never happened; although the League of Nations adopted a resolution on the restoration of the independence of Georgia twice (on 22 October 1922, and on 25 September, 1925). It was obvious that the independence of Georgia could not survive, taking into consideration the fact that Bolsheviks had already conquered two neighboring countries – Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Russian aggression was not avoided by the agreement concluded between Georgia and Russia on May 7, 1920. On February 25, 1921, despite the fierce resistance of Tbilisi residents, the city was seized by the 11th army of the Bolsheviks (Bakhtadze, 2009). S. Orjonikidze communicated the fact to Lenin from Baku via telegram saying “The Red Flag of Soviet Power Flies over Tiflis. Long Live Soviet Georgia”! Georgia was declared a Soviet Socialist Republic. A “Revolutionary Committee” (Revcom) was set

up in Tbilisi. The democratically elected government of Georgia left the country believing that they would return soon. However, their expectation was not met and their life in exile was burdened with nostalgia. For some, the exile turned out quite long, for others – even fatal.

Destruction in its literal and figurative sense began anew. Years of aggressive atheism commenced in Georgia. The Russian Cathedral of Alexander Nevsky, which was located in the place of the current Parliament building, was demolished and the construction of a new building began in its place. A mosque dating back to the 7th c. – known as Ali Mosque - was also demolished. The Patriarch of Georgia, Ambrosi Khelaia (Besarion Khelaia - Ambrosius of Georgia, the same Saint Ambrosius the Confessor, Ambrosi Aghmsarebeli) responded to the annexation of Georgia with a memorandum sent to the “Genoese Conference” (April-May, 1922). The leader of the Georgian Church informed the world that “the Georgian nation was being deprived of its mother tongue, and its ancestral national culture and religious belief were profaned” and demanded that “the Russian military occupation be withdrawn from Georgia immediately”. However his calls, as well as his numerous pleas addressed to the authorities, went unheard and unanswered (Alasania, 2006). On February 25, 1922, on the anniversary of the Bolshevik occupation, the first convention of Georgian Soviets was held; it approved “the Constitution of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic”. However, after a while they decided to create the Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of Transcaucasia, which included Georgia (Sakartvelo) along with Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In 1922, the federative setup of Transcaucasia was completed. The name Georgia was once again secondary, and from 1922 to 1936 Tbilisi became the capital of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic as well as the capital of Georgia. Tbilisi housed the highest authorities of the federal government, and the management of Transcaucasian economic, cultural, and socialist programs was based here. In a few months all political parties, except for the Communist party, were banned, and the purges and prosecution of non-communists started. In August 1923, a convention for the persecuted Socialist–Democratic Party was held in Tbilisi, which reaffirmed the negative attitude of people to the Communists; however, the government went against the general trend existing in society and adopted a resolution on the final abolition of the Socialist-Democratic Party.

Georgian people adapted to the new regime with great reluctance and difficulty. A group of exiled politicians decided to stage a revolt against the red government in 1924 (Kirtadze, 1996).

Despite the fact that on August 6, 1924, the Cheka (Extraordinary Commission - the secret police) arrested Valiko Jugheli, who had been sent from abroad and who warned his friends from prison to abandon any thoughts of a revolt, a poorly-organized rebellion went ahead as planned, and as a consequence of betrayal resulted in a great number of casualties (Kirtadze, 1996, pp. 161-193.). It took a long time for the wounds inflicted during the failed revolt to heal. One of the leaders of the revolt, Kakutsa Cholokashvili, managed to leave the country along with a small unit of “the sworn people” who had been organizing revolts all over Georgia since 1922, when the Committee of Independence was established. In 2005, his remains were repatriated from France, and he was buried in the Mtatsminda cemetery. This step represented a partial restoration of justice for the Georgian people.

The new government of Soviet Georgia took both positive and negative steps in the process of establishing its authority. In 1923, 72% percent of the total number of unemployed Georgians lived in Tbilisi. By the end of the 1930s unemployment was eliminated. Despite intensive efforts in the field of education, in 1922 26.8% of Tbilisi population were illiterate. Active measures were taken to improve the situation and eliminate illiteracy. In 1925 regular radio programs were launched.

Gradually, the country entered a period of economic stabilization. In 1925 there were 10 bath-houses in the city. In the same year the first buses appeared. In 1927 the first line of Avchala hydro power station became operational. In addition, the Chelyuskin Bridge (Queen Tamar Bridge), the IMEL building, and the upper station of the Funicular were built. From 1928/9, the implementation of five-year plans began, with a temporary suspension from 1942 to 1946 due to the beginning of the war. The very first five-year-plans turned out to be really impressive. During 1928, 1929, and 1930, the Georgian Polytechnical University, the Agricultural University, and the Medical University were founded in succession based on the model of Tbilisi State University. The process of nationalization was in progress. In 1932 the Natakhtari water pipe was built. In addition, the expansion of the sewage system commenced. In 1934 trams started to use a wide-rail system. In 1935, the construction of the River Mtkvari bank segment, in particular, the section between the Elbakidze and Vorontsov Bridge completed. The construction of residential houses was expanded. In 1937 trolley buses started to run in the city. In 1932 the Soviet Academy of Sciences was established. The Academy represented a Georgian branch of the Transcaucasian Academy of Sciences which turned into the Georgian Academy of Sciences in 1941. In 1936 the Institute of Languages, History and Material Culture (ENIMKI) was established, which later laid a foundation for all the humanitarian institutes in Tbilisi. At that time, different scientific schools appeared and masterpieces of literature were created. Tbilisi residents led a very active and creative life.

The abovementioned success was achieved against the backdrop of severe repressions. Despite the high professional level of the majority of the Tbilisi State University professors, who had the opportunity to get education abroad in the best universities, their life at the university was not easy since they competed with poorly-educated scholars. The staff of the university was divided into those who collaborated with the Soviet system and were obedient, and the others - for whom the Soviet system was not acceptable. The new government tried to impose a new ideology and that process was very painful. In 1926 the founder and rector of the university I. Javakhishvili was not only dismissed from his position in times of the so-called “kondratievshchina”, but later he was also forced to leave the university.

On May 28, 1931, 10 professors were dismissed from Tbilisi State University – among them: Grigol Tsereteli, Mikheil Polievktov, Giorgi Gamqrelidze and, a year later, education in Georgia was placed under the supervision of the all-Soviet Union Georgian public commissariat. In a report about the meeting held at the University (April 5, 1928) written by the head of the Main Political Division, Lavrentiy Beria, the mood in the city was clear:

“Despite the purges exercised at the University and the limitations set during admissions, more than half of the students are our opponents... The professors who have chauvinist and anti-Soviet attitudes are still very popular among the students. Professor Javakhishvili is idolized. He is a real icon for the students. It is not accidental that at the ten-year-anniversary of the State University Filipp Makharadze, Tedo Ghlonti and other representatives of the government were met coldly. Instead, when someone nominated Prof. Javakhishvili for the position of the president of the commission, the idea was applauded by the attendees... We will have to accept the relationship with the type of students for quite a long time”.

In 1931 Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, Pavle Ingorokva, Ioseb Imedashvili and others were expelled from the Writers’ Union of Georgia. In 1932, an internal passport system was introduced in Tbilisi for its residents as well as for those not living in the city.

From November 12, 1931 until August 8, 1938, the Communist Party in Georgia was presided over by Lavrentiy Beria. From 17.10.1932 until 01.04.1937 Beria also led the party committee of Transcaucasia. The same position was later taken by Kandid Charkviani (1938-1952). After the abolishment of Transcaucasia, he became a People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs (NKVD) in Moscow (on December 8, 1938). His tenure was marked with extreme repressions in Tbilisi as well as throughout Georgia. In 1933 the first general plan for the development of the city was issued. Beginning in the same year “the purges” took a severe form in Georgia. People became ruthless

and lost trust. Denunciations and confrontation, sometimes because of envy, were very common. University professors, distinguished representatives of creative intelligentsia, politicians and public officials were persecuted. Many people fell victim to repressions. In January 1934, at the party congress of Georgia, L. Beria announced that a Georgian “National Centre” was discovered and after a few days, at the Transcaucasia Communist party meeting, Mikha Kakhiani, Levan Ghogheridze and Samson Mamulia were tracked down and later shot.

During the Soviet regime, equality before the law was only proclaimed on paper – the urban population had better access to education than residents of rural areas. There was no freedom of speech and everything was under censorship. In Tbilisi, and throughout the whole country, repressions, imprisonment, and sending people into exile continued from the very first day of the Soviet system until the death of Stalin. Besides officials and politicians, these processes victimized Budu Mdivani, Lavrentiy Kartvelishvili, Mikheil Okujava, as well as representatives of art and literature such as Mikheil Javakhishvili, Evgeni Mikeladze, Alexander (Sandro) Akhmeteli, Titsian Tabidze and Vakhtang Kotetishvili. Paolo Iashvili committed suicide. At times the repressions became very intensive. The previous generation of people sentenced to death was replaced with a new one; the methods remained the same.

Based on the Constitution adopted in 1936, the Federative Republic of Transcaucasia was abolished and the Republic of Georgia was restored as a part of the USSR, similar to neighboring Azerbaijan and Armenia. From then on Tbilisi was only the capital of Georgia. In 1939 the first elections of the representatives of Tbilisi Municipality Council and regional councils were held. From then on they exercised the management of the city, which was controlled by the city and regional committees of the Communist party.

In the 1930s migration became especially active. Russians, Ukrainians, and Ossetians moved from the North Caucasus to Georgia, and the number of Armenians increased at the expense of those resettled from the Republic of Armenia. In 1939, the number of ethnic Georgians significantly decreased due to the migration and for the first time in history, the main ethnic group of the country made up less than 2/3 of its population (Jaoshvili, 1984, pp. 140-141).

During the war between Germany and the Soviet Union (1941-45), Tbilisi not only sent more than 80 thousand fighters to the front,<sup>2</sup> many of whom perished, but also hosted evacuated industrial enterprises, hospitals and many refugees.

---

<sup>2</sup> Out of the 3,5 million population of Georgia 700 000 participated in the war; over 200,000 people (8.5%) were killed or lost (R. Gachechiladze, *My XX Century*, pp. 412-413). V. Jaoshvili indicates 700

The clergy took an active part in World War II. Of course this was not left unnoticed and, together with the hard work and the diplomatic talent of the Patriarch of Georgia Kalistrate Tsintsadze, in 1943 the Russian church finally and officially recognized the territorial autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which had already been announced on March 12, 1917. On December 23, 1977, Ilia II, who served as the Metropolitan of Tskhum-Apkhazeti (Ghudushauri-Shiolashvili), was elected as Catholicos-Patriarch. His greatest achievement is that the long-term efforts towards the recognition of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church finally paid off. In 1990, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople recognized the Georgian Orthodox Church's autocephaly and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March published a document recognizing the title of the leader of the Georgian Church - Catholicos-Patriarch (Alasania, 2006, pp. 53-54.).

Some Georgians had different attitudes towards World War II. A part of the Georgians living in Georgia as well as abroad saw the war as a chance to escape from Communist rule and restore independence. On September 20, 1942 a trial of young Georgian poets and writers (among them Giorgi Dzigvashvili, Kote Joglidze, Shalva Shavianidze, Giorgi and Mikheil Imerlishvili, etc.), students of the State University who were accused of attempting to organize an armed revolt against the Communist régime was held in Tbilisi. As a result, 17 out of 33 members of the group were shot, including the famous writer, Kote Khimshiashvili; others were sent into exile, where some of them died.<sup>3</sup>

In 1945 the war ended and the surviving fighters returned home. National treasures that were exported abroad by the Democratic Government in 1921 also returned to Georgia, accompanied by Ekvtime Takaishvili. All those years the latter had been a loyal “Treasurer”, living abroad and oftentimes starving. He lost his wife, but guarded the treasure regardless of the temptation to give up and concede at least a part of it. He saved the cultural heritage that these treasures represented for the nation. Unfortunately, his fellow countrymen failed to appreciate the merits of this tortured and distinguished person at that time in history. In fact, he spent the rest of his life under house confinement and not many people dared to communicate with him without a special “assignment” (Megrelidze, Takaishvili, 1989, pp. 93-97).

On March 5, 1953, the death of Stalin proved to be a new page in the history of Tbilisi life. Sometime after the political crisis caused by his death, Nikita Khrushchev was appointed as the Chief of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. In

---

000 (p. 144). According to Surguladze, A. Surguladze, P. (1991). History of Georgia. over 300000 of the whole number perished, p. 286.

<sup>3</sup> Anti-Soviet plot . (n.d.). Retrieved from [Wikipedia.org/wiki/1941-Anti-Soviet\\_plot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1941-Anti-Soviet_plot).



Georgia, the position was occupied by Vasil Mzhavanadze. At this point, the rehabilitation of the repressed began. Many people who had been exiled but managed to survive returned to their homes. Most of them were educated professionals and creative people. They filled the city with new energy, and reluctantly spoke about the years spent in exile.

In 1956, Tbilisi survived a new blow. Following the condemnation of Stalin's cult at the 20<sup>th</sup> convention of the Communist Party, some representatives of the younger generation, lacking correct information about Stalin and considering him to be the greatest Georgian to have ever lived, deemed this act an insult to national dignity and started protesting across the country, mainly in Tbilisi. All of this had a tint of a national movement. The government responded promptly; it opened fire on the demonstrators. The number of casualties and deaths was high. Many people lost family members.

In 1958 the Ministry of Education removed from the school curricula the History of Georgia, which was replaced with History of USSR, actually with History of Russia. The only reaction was a protest by the school teacher, Nikoloz Samkharadze, who came to the Ministry of Education, interrupted the meeting and made an extensive speech in which he boldly talked about the significance of the Georgian history for the formation of national self-consciousness. As a result, "the invader" was detained. They even placed him in a mental asylum to prevent spreading information on the case, which was standard practice established to silence dissidents throughout the Soviet years. However, his insanity was not proved and he had to spend several years in exile, after which he became a very famous surgeon and chose to never go back to his past, even in his memories, and to reconcile with reality (Potskhveria, 2014).

Parallel to this, life went on and the process of liberalization had commenced. Heavy industry was developing in the country. A factory building electric passenger trains started to work, among other factories coming on line. After building the main gas pipelines in the '50-'60s, Tbilisi started to consume natural gas. In 1957 TV programs were launched and in 1965 programs from Tbilisi studio were transmitted to Union TV via the radio-relay line. In 1958 a cable car line was built, and by 1966 Tbilisi already had metro stations.

In 1958, people celebrated the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Tbilisi. Many guests visited the city to mark the day. In 1966, the 800th year anniversary of Shota Rustaveli was an important step in the development of Rustaveli studies.

In October 1964, Nikita Khrushchev was dismissed and Leonid Brezhnev was elected as the first secretary of the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of the

Soviet Union (CPSU). The new management made a decision to return to the management style of Stalin. A decisive struggle over the fight against “evil traditions” began, leaving society on the road to degradation. The Soviet system, based on dictatorship and a centralized economy, was not efficient and resulted in corruption, which was tolerated to some extent. Corruption, low salaries, and the deficit of basic everyday items was an everyday occurrence. However, the liberalization that took place during the Khrushchev years had partial benefits, and life recovered in Tbilisi, which was discernible in the fields of art and literature as well as everyday life.

In addition to the Rustaveli Theatre, Tbilisi boasted the K. Marjanishvili theatre, the A. Griboyedov theatre, and the Armenian Drama theatre named after S. Shaumian. Later, the Film Actors Theatre, the Professional State Youth Georgian and Russian theatres, the Puppet Theater, and later, the Rezo Gabriadze Marionette Theater were created. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were 3 circuses in Tbilisi. During the 20th century, the Georgian Circus remained an important gathering place for Tbilisi residents, especially for the children. The city had a philharmonic hall and a zoo.

Tbilisi Ballet School was led by a well-known choreographer, Vakhtang Chabukiani. He staged “Gorda,” by composer David Toradze, and “Othello,” by Aleksi Machavariani. The masters of dance – Vera Tsignadze and Zurab Kikaleishvili became popular under his guidance. The following persons staged performances, danced or sang at the Tbilisi Opera: Giorgi Aleksidze, Dimitri (Dodo) Aleksidze, Vano Sarajishvili, David Gamrekeli, Zurab Anjaparidze, Petre Amiranashvili, Nadezhda Kharadze, Medea Amiranashvili, Tsisana Tatishvili, Nodar Andghuladze, Zurab Sotkilava, Batu Kraveishvili, Olga Kuznetsova, Leila Gotsiridze, Paata Burchuladze, Maia Tomadze, Revaz Maghalashvili, Beka Monavardisashvili, etc. The Georgian national dance company founded and led by Nino Ramishvili and Iliko Sukhishvili in Tbilisi made Georgian dance popular worldwide. In addition to dance, Georgian folk songs were promoted by “Erisioni,” led by Jemal Chkuaseli, and the ensemble “Rustavi,” led by Anzor Erkomaishvili. The world was acquainted with the art of Fridon Sulaberidze, Tengiz Sukhishvili and Ruben Chokhnelidze. The Polytechnic Institute was led by the well-known musician Konstantin Pevzner and became popular for jazz. The variety orchestra “Rero”, the vocal-instrumental ensembles “Orera” and “Iveria,” and Alexander Basilaia entertained not only the city of Tbilisi, but various cities of the world as well. Nani Bregvadze, Vakhtang (Buba) Kikabidze, Robert Bardzimashvili, Gia Chirakadze, Medea Dzidziguri, Gogi Dolidze and many others appeared on the stage. Tbilisi had the pleasure of enjoying the performances of the Ishkhneli sisters.

The city was remarkable for its composers and musician-performers. These included:

Andria Balanchivadze, Sul Khan Tsintsadze, David Toradze, Aleksii Machavariani, Otar Taktakishvili, Shota Milorava, Rezo Laghidze, Giya Kancheli, Nodar Gabunia, Felix Glonti, Sul Khan Nasidze, Bidzina Kvernadze, Rusudan (Matsatso) Sepiskveradze, Revaz Gabichvadze, Grigol Kiladze, Alexander Shaverzashvili, Victor Dolidze, Iona Tuskiya, Shalva Shvelidze, Eliso Virsaladze, Manana Doijashvili, Marine, Irine and Nana Iashvili, Liana Isakadze, Lekso Toradze, Alexander Korsantia, Temur Matureli, Tengiz Amirejibi, Alexander Nizharadze, Gulnara Kavtaradze, Eteri Anjaparidze, Marine Mdivani, Tamar Gabarashvili, Alexander Chijavadze, Otar Chubinashvili, Eldar Isakadze, Tamaz Batiashvili, Nodar Zhvania, Konstantine Vardeli, Tamar Licheli, Alexander Korsantia, Valerian Shiukashvili, Eliso Bolkvadze, performers and pedagogues Anna Tulashvili, Anastasia Virsaladze, Vanda Shiukashvili, Levan Shiukashvili, Roza Rozhok, Emil Gurevich, Shota Shanidze, Luarsab Iashvili, conductors - Odysseas Dimitriadis, Didim Mirtskhulava, Vakhtang Paliashvili, Ivane Paliashvili, Givi Azmaiparashvili, Zakaria Khurodze, Jemal Gokieli, Jansugh Kakhidze, Vakhtang Kakhidze, Revaz Takidze, Lile Kiladze, Shalva Azmaiparashvili, Irakli Chiaureli and many more. There was a state symphonic orchestra (1933), Tbilisi V. Abashidze Musical Theater (1934), State String Quartet (1944), Georgian Radio and TV String Quartet (1980), and a Philharmonic Cappella of Georgia in the city.

Owing to Georgian film-makers, Georgian cinema won more than 100 prizes at international film festivals throughout its existence. Nikoloz Shengelaia, Mikheil Chiaureli, Siko Dolidze, Vakhtang Tabliashvili, Leo Esakia, David Rondeli, and Shota Managadze practiced their art in the film studio in Tbilisi. They were later joined by artists who came to prominence in the 1960s: Mikheil Kobakhidze, Otar Ioseliani, Tengiz Abuladze, Rezo Chkheidze, Sergo Parajanov, Eldar Shengelaia, Giorgi Shengelaia, Merab Kokochashvili, Lana Gogoberidze, Nana Mchedlidze, Kartlos Khotivari, Rezo Tabukashvili, Gia Chubabria, Irakli Kvirikadze, Soso Chkhaidze, Rezo Esadze, Guram Pataraia; the next generation – Nana Jorjadze, Temur Babloani, Alexander Rekhviashvili, Nodar Managadze, Ramaz Khotivari, Zurab Kandelaki, etc. Tbilisi theaters and the Georgian cinematograph were represented by artists and directors such as Nato Vachnadze, Sesilia Takaishvili, Sesilia Tsutsunava, Vaso Godziashvili, Elene Kipshidze, Giorgi Shavgulidze, Veriko Anjaparidze, Akaki Khorava, Medea Japaridze, Alexander Zhorzholiani, Sergo Zakariadze, Tamar Tsitsishvili, Ushangi Chkheidze, Spartak Baghashvili, Akaki Kvantaliani, Erosi Manjgaladze, Alexander Zhorzholiani, Marine Tbileli, Otar Megvinitukhutsesi, Tengiz Archvadze, Vaso Kushitashvili, Shalva Gambashidze, Dimitri Aleksidze, Akaki Vasadze, Lili Ioseliani, Georgy Tovstogov, Elena Burmistrova, Mavr Piasetsky, Archil Gomiashvili, Giga Lortkipanidze, Mikheil Tumanishvili, Sophiko Chiaureli, Kote Makharadze, Leila Abashidze, Lia Eliava, Medea Chakhava, Pier Kobakhidze, Ipolite Khvichia, Akaki Kvantaliani,

David (Dodo) Abashidze, Temur Chkheidze, Medea Kuchukhidze, Rezo Gabriadze, Akaki Khintibidze, etc. The plays of Robert Sturua marked an important epoch in the history of the Georgian theater.

Georgian prose and poetry were popularized by Galaktion Tabidze, Giorgi Leonidze, Lado Asatiani, Grigol Abashidze, Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, Simon Chikovani, Irakli Abashidze, Nodar Dumbadze, Revaz Inanishvili, Chabua Amirejibi, Ana Kalandadze, Ioseb Noneshvili, Murman Lebanidze, Shota Nishnianidze, Mukhran Machavariani, Otar Chiladze, Tamaz Chiladze, Guram Dochanashvili, Polikarpe Kakabadze, etc. But nobody could compete with Ioseb Grishashvili in praising Tbilisi in his unique poetry.

In addition to the above-mentioned artists, there were others working in the fields of fine arts, sculpture, architecture and related arts, namely: Iakob Nikoladze, Mose Toidze, Sergo Kobuladze, Tamar Abakelia, Ucha Japaridze, Simon Virsaladze, Natella Iankoshvili, Parnaoz Lapiashvili, Robert Sturua, Avtandil Varazi, Lev Baiakhchev, Alexander Bandzeladze, Edmund Kalandadze, Dinara Nodia, Nikoloz Ignatov, Tengiz Mirzashvili, Giorgi Shkhvatsbaia, Juna Mikatadze, Loreta Shengelia-Abashidze, Mikheil Khvitia, Rusudan Petviashvili, Giorgi Bughadze, Givi Kandareli, Zurab Nizharadze, Elguja Amashukeli, Merab Berdzenishvili, Merab Merabishvili, Bidzina Avalishvili, Nikoloz Kandelaki, Zurab Tsereteli, Giorgi Totibadze, Apollon Kutateladze, Koba Guruli, Irakli Ochiauri, Giorgi Ochiauri, Aleksandre Aleks-Meskhishvili, Revaz Bairamashvili, Archil Kurdiani, Zakaria Kurdiani, Ivane Chkhenkeli, Shota Kavlashvili, Giorgi Batiashvili, Konstantine Chkheidze, Amiran Bakhtadze, Valeri Bakhtadze, Vladimir Beridze, Levan Beridze, Levan Bokeria, etc.

Well-known sportsmen lived in Tbilisi. World championships and competitions in various sports were held here. There were female chess players, multiple champions of the world and of the Soviet Union – Nona Gaprindashvili, Nana Aleksandria, Maia Chiburdanidze, Nana Ioseliani, Nino Gurieli; Olympic champions – Viktor Saneyev, Givi Kartoza, Mirian Tsalkalamanidze, Rafael Chimishkyan, David Tsimakuridze, Robert Rurua, Zurab Sakandelidze, Robert Shavlakadze, Mikheil Korkia, Shota Chochishvili, Levan Tediashvili, Alexander Anpilogov, David Gobejishvili, Giorgi Zviadauri, Giorgi Asanidze, etc. popularized Georgian sport all over the world. Tbilisi was proud of the winners of multiple world championships and championships of the Soviet Union - Givi Balavadze, Omar Pkhakadze, David Kvachadze, Nino Dumbadze, Alexander Metreveli - basketball players, handball players, water-polo players and the football team “Dinamo”. The “Dinamo” football club’s victory in the Cup Winners’ Cup competition in 1981 was a national celebration. The streets of Tbilisi were full of happy and proud fans during the whole night.

Tbilisi was proud of its sciences. Georgia has established representatives in all fields of science. The Soviet encyclopedia, an explanatory dictionary in the Georgian language in eight volumes was published; original sources of the history of Georgia were translated, published and studied. Simon Kaukhchishvili and his students greatly contributed to this effort, as well as the Source Commission under the Academy of Sciences led by Shota Dzidziguri and Revaz Kiknadze. Particular success was achieved in fields of science such as history, ethnology, and archeology, which was facilitated by the founder of Tbilisi State University – Ivane Javakhishvili, and his students – Simon Janashia and Niko Berdzenishvili. Caucasian studies, philosophy, Byzantine studies developed.

A well-known psychologist, Dimitri Uznadze created the “Theory of Attitude and Set” which brought recognition to the Georgian psychological school. The linguistic school led by Akaki Shanidze, Giorgi Akhvlediani, and Arnold Chikobava won recognition. Their scientific achievements were developed by Givi Machavariani and Tamaz Gamkrelidze. Tamaz Gamkrelidze and, a bit later, archaeologist David Lortkipanidze were elected as members of the National Academy of America, which was unprecedented at that time for Georgia and any former Soviet republics, with the exception of Russia.

The Georgian school of Oriental Studies is well-known all over the world. In this respect, a particular contribution was made by Giorgi Tsereteli, Sergi Jikia, Konstantine Tsereteli, Valerian Gabashvili, etc.

Fundamental research in Georgian art criticism was conducted by Giorgi Chubinashvili, Shalva Amiranashvili, Vakhtang Beridze, etc.

Georgian scientists such as Elephter Andronikashvili, Giorgi Chikovani, Giorgi Khutishvili, and Irakli Gverdtsiteli made solid contributions to the development of various fields of modern physics. Evgeniy Kharadze formed a basis for the development of astronomy and astrophysics.

Sciences like geology, geography, geophysics were developed. Significant contributions to these fields were made by Alexander Janelidze, Alexander Javakhishvili and Theopane Davitaia.

Of particular mention are the achievements of the physiological school founded by the globally recognized scientist Ivane Beritashvili. His long-lasting scientific career left a rich legacy. Another special mention goes to Peter Kometiani, the founder of biochemistry in Georgia and the international founder of neurochemistry.

The school of Georgian mathematician-mechanics is also well-known in Georgia. This school conducted research mainly in two directions: mathematical analysis and applied theory of elasticity. Niko Muskhelishvili, Ilia Vekua, Victor Kuprava, etc. became famous in the first direction; Kiriak Zavriev, Alexander Kakushadze, Shalva Mikeladze, Giorgi Mukhadze, and others won recognition in the second direction.

Georgian technical sciences had good traditions.

Despite the fact that there were plenty of loyal adherents of the system in Georgia, it was absolutely clear that the level of freedom was higher in Tbilisi compared to other cities of the Soviet Union, as evidenced by the rather daring humor of Georgian films of the 1960s, the magazines disseminated at universities, and Olympiads, organized at the universities. The Georgian people never reconciled with the loss of independence and were waiting for a suitable time to regain it – something that was on the horizon unbeknownst to them.

On September 29, 1972 Eduard Shevardnadze replaced Vasil Mzhavanadze, who was removed from the office of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, and started a robust fight against corruption and “evil traditions”, according to the imperative at that time. By that period corruption had seeped into higher education as well, and nepotism and bribery dominated at institutions of higher learning. The Medical University was particularly notorious in this regard. But due to the fact that corruption was an inseparable part of the system, neither removal from office nor detainment of the culprits brought any discernible positive results. The struggle against corruption that had been initiated was often just a pretense to claim action was being taken, and had only temporary and moderate success, usually ending up with the executives drowning in the swamp of corruption themselves.

*The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe* was held in Helsinki in 1975. In response to this conference, the Helsinki Group on Human Rights Protection was created in Tbilisi in 1976. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Merab Kostava, Viktor Rtskhiladze, Bego Bezhuashvili along with others were members of this group. The first issue of the magazine *Georgian Messenger*, edited by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was published in the same year. It was followed by *The Golden Fleece* and *The Theological Collection*. Their priorities included the Georgian language, the protection of monuments of culture, the violation of rights of political prisoners, corruption at the Patriarchate and the robbery of the treasury, etc. Merab Kostava and Zviad Gamsakhurdia were arrested for their dissident activities, which were unacceptable for the system in 1978.

Despite the fact that in all the constitutions of Georgia, Georgian was declared the state language, the area of its application in Georgia and particularly in Tbilisi was rather limited. Record management was carried out in Russian in a large number of state institutions. Dissertations were also written in Russian or in Georgian and Russian at best, because this was the requirement of the Higher Attestation Commission. A huge amount of material and physical resources were spent on this double work. In 1975, according to the new requirement of the Ministry of Education of the USSR, a doctoral dissertation had to be submitted only in Russian. Georgian professors and writers sent a letter to E. Shevardnadze and L. Brezhnev. After a while, to downplay the impact of the letter, E. Shevardnadze solemnly declared to the delegates of the 26th Congress of the Party that “for Georgians, the sun rises not in the east, but in the north”. Knowledge of the Russian language was a mandatory precondition for a career and therefore non-Georgians, as well as, Georgian citizens of the republic, with some minor exceptions, were educated in Russian, regardless of their command of Georgian. Nonetheless, this appeared not to be sufficient for the center. In 1978 there was an attempt to remove from the new Constitution of Georgia the article according to which Georgian was declared to be the state language of Georgia, and equated it to any other language. The professors had to deliver the lectures in Russian. This actually meant giving up the history of Georgia and the traditions (language, homeland, religion) which existed in the country from the 3rd century BC. The new constitutional changes were discussed in almost all institutions in Tbilisi. All of society raised its voice. The student community was particularly active. The protest march from Tbilisi State University to the Palace of Government expressed the will of the whole population. The situation escalated rapidly; the government gave up and restored the respective clause about the Georgian language in the Constitution in accordance with the demands of the students and of the whole republic.

In 1979 the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan to wage a war of conquest. Despite the fact that the catastrophic outcome of this criminal step was clear to the international community from the very beginning, finding themselves locked in an escalating crisis, the leaders of the Soviet Union continued to wage a war which claimed the lives of thousands of people and significantly accelerated the inevitable collapse of the system.

Tbilisi was a large industrial and cultural center by that time. There were 197 secondary, 33 music, 50 sport, 1 choreographic, and 3 art schools, 134 republican or union research and academic institutions, 24 hospitals, 36 polyclinics, and other institutions in Tbilisi. National and international tournaments in various sports, theater festivals, and competitions of musicians were held in the city. The best performers and actors in the world used to tour the city which was famous for its filmmaking, theater, performing

arts, variety shows, opera and ballet. They were all very impressed with the cultural sophistication of Tbilisi audience.

National and international conferences and symposiums were frequently held in the city. In 1975 the city population exceeded one million. In October 1978 the first folk festival was held in the city and the annual festival of “Tbilisoba” was established. The territory of Tbilisi had increased almost 9-fold from the 1920s. There were ten administrative districts in the city from 1985: Nadzaladevi, Didube, Chughureti, Isani, Mtatsminda, Vake, Krtsanisi, Samgori, Gldani and Saburtalo. They had different names during that time: Lenin, First of May, October, 26 Commissars, Kalinin, Orjonikidze, Kirov, Factory, Gldani and Saburtalo. A railway line, a highway and aviation routes passed through the city, and from the 1980s Tbilisi established direct flight routes to various international destinations. New roads and streets were built in the years after the war: Varaziskhevi, connecting the Hero Square to Vake, and Tamarashvili Street, connecting Vake to Saburtalo, among others.

However, it seemed that many people were still unhappy and the system was expiring. In the 1950s of the past century Goderdzi Urgebadze (monk Gabriel) constructed a four-domed church in his yard in Tbilisi. Later he served in different churches. Much later, in 2012 the monk was canonized by the Georgian Orthodox Church for his activities. At the first May demonstration in 1965, he burnt Lenin’s portrait and was condemned to death penalty. However, he was not shot; he was placed in a psychiatric hospital and brutally tortured (Mama Gabrieli).

In the 1960s-1970s there were several explosions in different Georgian cities - Sukhumi, Kutaisi, Tbilisi. On April 19, 1976, there appeared an address on behalf of “The Georgian Liberation Front”, which included several requirements: the removal of the Soviet Army, proclaiming the independence of Georgia, recognition of the neutrality of Georgia, the Democratic Party, holding presidential and parliamentary elections. Finally, the man behind all those activities was found. It was Vladimir Zhvania, who had a too complicated past. His father, a member of the Bolshevik party, who participated in the occupation of independent Georgia in 1921. However, he later became a victim of purges, and was shot in 1938. Later, his son Vladimir, completely disappointed in the Soviet regime, attempted to cross the border several times; during the last attempt he was detained and condemned to three years of imprisonment. In 1977 he was condemned to the death penalty and killed (Archive). There were several authors, who paid attention to his activities and motivation and drew the attention of the community (Tavberidze, Suladze, Potskhveria, 2014; Chkheidze, 2016).



In November, 1983 there was a failed attempt to hijack a plane by several young members of elite families in Tbilisi. It resulted in the death of seven people, and a trial against 6. Four of them were condemned to the death penalty and shot. Among them there was one priest who was not on that plane and was not connected with that tragic case. Two females were condemned to imprisonment for different terms (Gega Kobakhidze). The whole community was divided into two parts: one – those who considered the event to be a protest against the regime and made a request to cancel the death penalty and the other – those who considered it to be a terrorist attack and believed that the sentence was adequate.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union and appointed E. Shevardnadze to the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR. Their names are directly associated with the “Transformation” (Perestroika) reforms which resulted in the final collapse of the state. The destruction of the socialist camp was methodically carried out in 1989-92. In 1989 The Berlin Wall was officially opened and later, in 1990-92, it was demolished. Communist dictatorships were overthrown in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, the Democratic Republic of Germany, and Albania. 1990 marked the reunification of East and West Germany. It was clear that the collapse of the Soviet Empire was just days away.

In Tbilisi E. Shevardnadze was replaced by J. Patiashvili. Great upheavals and transformations were imminent. Publicity and transparency brought many theretofore hidden things to light. Frequent discussions were held in Tbilisi on all important issues confronting the country in those days with the participation of all the layers of society. The topics included whether an additional railway line connecting Georgia to Russia or an atomic power plant were required, and whether it would pose a threat to the local ecology, the condition of cultural monuments, and their restoration. Another debated topic was relocating the artillery polygon of the Soviet Army deployed at the David Gareji Monastery Complex. The opening of the state archives paved the way for a discussion of prohibited topics and a revival of the forgotten records of history. Years of independence from 1918 to 1921 attracted particular interest, and the attention of historian-researchers became mostly focused on modern history. The discovery of previously unknown materials related to the assassination of Ilia Chavchavadze shed light on the subject and made a new approach to its study possible. The topics open to debate were multiple and diverse, but of equal importance was the fact that people learned to express their opinions publicly and openly.

In order to mitigate the crisis and shore up their crumbling empire, the Soviet government decided to make changes to the Constitution in 1988, which actually made it

impossible for the republics to exit the Soviet Union. Once again, Tbilisi resisted the attempt of turning back time and achieved its goal by conducting protest marches, and other forms of civil disobedience.

A basis for a multi-party system was being formed in the new Georgia. Ilia Chavchavadze Society was created in 1987. The National Independence Party, National Justice Union, the Popular Front, St. Ilia Society, Shota Rustaveli Society, Georgian Greens Party, Republican Party, National-Democratic Party, etc., emerged in 1988-90. Through its repressive actions, the Soviet government had inadvertently influenced outcomes that were opposite to what was expected. The huge empire was collapsing and the system reacted by activating the only remaining leverage it had against the breakaway republics. It forced or manipulated the autonomous units of the republics, arranged according to the “Matryoshka” principle, to oppose these independent-minded republics using a similar scenario: Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Transnistria in Moldova, etc.

During this period Tbilisi became a witness to one more bloody action. It began when a demand of several Abkhazes to grant independence to Abkhazia in June 1988 gave rise to mass protests in Tbilisi. There followed a counter-protest of Abkhazes with the same demand on March 18, 1989. This, in turn, prompted an escalation of the situation in Tbilisi, and the Soviet army raided a peaceful action in front of the House of Government, violently putting the protest down with army shovels, spades, and gas on April 9, 1989. 19 people (mostly women) died, and hundreds of people were sickened by the chemicals used. A state of emergency was declared in Tbilisi. There was a large influx of people visiting Tbilisi in those days - journalists, members of an ad hoc commission, and common people trying to express sympathy and participate in the events.

Jumber Patiashvili, who resigned from the post of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, was replaced by Givi Gumbaridze, but it was already impossible to stop the surge of the National Movement. Political forces were grouped and regrouped, and much confrontation and controversy occurred between them. In 1989 Tbilisi said its final goodbye to one of the remarkable leaders of the National Movement - Merab Kostava, who died in a car accident. Radical attitudes took hold of the participants in the National Movement. A Conference of the National Movement – Popular Forum was held in the Philharmonic Concert Hall in Tbilisi on March 13-15, 1990, and after boycotting and disrupting the elections of March 25, 1990, the Helsinki Union and its supporting forces created a new political bloc named “The Round Table” which united seven organizations. The latter won a resounding victory and garnered a parliamentary majority (62%) in the elections of the Supreme

Council of Georgia on October 28, 1990, which made it possible to declare Georgia a republic, elect Zviad Gamsakhurdia as the chairman of the Supreme Council of Georgia, hold a referendum on the state independence of Georgia on March 31, 1991 - which was supported by 97% out of the 90% of the entire population participating in the referendum - restore Georgian independence on April 9, 1991 and elect Zviad Gamsakhurdia as the first president of Georgia as a result of the presidential elections held on May 26, 1991. The Law of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia “On Governance of the Georgian Capital - Tbilisi” became effective on August 10, 1991. Under this law, the Sakrebulo became the local government authority, while the City Hall and the Prefecture became the administrative governing authorities. The latter was abolished soon after. On December 19, 1992 the Georgian Parliament approved the Regulations “On the Powers of Governance Entities of the Georgian Capital - Tbilisi” which was again amended later. In 1998 the Georgian Parliament adopted a new law “On the Georgian Capital – Tbilisi,” according to which self-governance in Tbilisi is exercised by a representative entity – Tbilisi Sakrebulo, and local governance (administrative functions) are carried out by Tbilisi City Hall.

The independence that was declared on paper in 1991 was yet to be gained in actuality and there would be a high price to pay for the Georgian people and the city of Tbilisi.

By that time the center had fully activated the mechanisms of the separation of the autonomous units and started to stir up religious and ethnic conflicts. Against the background of the surge of the National Movement in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were requesting separation from Georgia almost simultaneously and in a similar sequence. In May 1989 one part of the Ossetian population applied to the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with a request to unite South and North Ossetia and include them in the Russian Federation, which was followed by the respective decision of the session of the People’s Deputy Council of the Autonomous District of South Ossetia on November 10, 1989, which was gradually implemented later. The “Declaration on the Sovereignty of South Ossetia” was adopted in September 1990; in November South Ossetia was declared a republic and in December Ossetia was declared an independent republic. In a letter sent to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union in June 1989, a meeting of representatives of the Abkhaz community requested to subordinate the Abkhaz Communist Organization directly to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union thereby bypassing Georgia, which was followed by the “Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Abkhaz ASSR” adopted at the session of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia on December 4, 1990. All of the above-mentioned was carried out against the backdrop of confrontations, clashes and

excesses. The Autonomous District of South Ossetia was abolished by the resolution of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia on December 11, 1990.

On December 8, 1991 in Belozhevskaya Pushcha (Belarus), political leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus declared the termination of the existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which was followed by the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Leaders of 11 states signed the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the termination of the existence of the USSR in Alma-Ata on December 21, 1991. Georgia did not participate in these events. Life in Tbilisi was not peaceful during that period. An overthrow of the government was underway. A certain part of the population was disappointed by the uncompromising nationalistic policy of the government and the serious mistakes made in conducting foreign policy led to tacit support for the change of government from abroad. Destructive internal and external forces were activated. An attack on the parliament building began on December 22, 1991, and on January 6 Zviad Gamsakhurdia left Tbilisi with a small group of supporters, resulting in the seizure of power by a military council led by Jaba Ioseliani, Tengiz Kitovani and Tengiz Sigua. During the period of their short-lived and incompetent rule, Georgia was involved in a civil war. There was a difficult economic and criminal situation in the country. Transportation was almost completely suspended in Tbilisi and the frightened population avoided going outside. Under these circumstances, a certain part of the population viewed the arrival of Eduard Shevardnadze from Moscow, who had earlier resigned from the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as a positive step. He returned to Tbilisi on March 7, 1992 and first became the head of the State Council created in place of the military council, and later – the head of state after the parliamentary elections of October 11, 1992.

The situation improved only partially. The abduction of people and attacks on cargo trains for the purposes of robbing them continued. Despite this, the moving of a major part of Georgian police and troops to Abkhazia for the protection of the traffic artery on August 14, 1992 proved to be fatal and became a reason for pushing the country towards war. The Georgian side lost the war, which caused the most severe damage to Tbilisi because the majority of the fighters were Tbilisi residents. Russian citizens, together with Abkhaz separatists, armed by the State and under the cover of the Russian land and air support, fought against Georgia. As a result, Tbilisi received an influx 300,000 IDPs from Abkhazia. In addition, there were refugees from former South Ossetia as well, and this worsened the already difficult economic situation further.

On August 24, 1995 a new Constitution was adopted, based on which presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled later in the year. As a result of elections held

on November 5, 1995, Eduard Shevardnadze became the president of Georgia and the Union of Citizens won a parliamentary majority. The Constitution also served as a basis for new legislation to fight the illegal armed formations roaming the country, and economic revival began as a result of reforms. But all of the above appeared to be temporary. Even though the Union of Citizens won a parliamentary majority on October 31, 1999, and on April 9, 2000 Eduard Shevardnadze once again became the president of Georgia, however with faked votes, it was clear that a crisis was imminent. Corruption permeated the country and corrupt government officials thought only about their own welfare rather than being motivated by the salvation of the country. However, a highly motivated young generation was already coming to the fore and was pushing for drastic change. These young people were not going to tolerate a medieval, authoritarian model based on strict subordination and injustice. A multi-party system already existed in the country. Under the conditions of open borders, Western democratic principles gradually took hold of a new generation of Georgian politicians and paved the way for subsequent reforms. Tbilisi entered the 21st century with many problems and at the same time hope, which proved justified, since only a short time was left until the Rose Revolution.

Thus, a quick glance at Tbilisi in the 20th century reveals a process of systemic changes, increasing urbanization, as well as the coexistence of multicultural and multi-religious communities. This paper traces the dichotomy between nation building and industrial, cultural and educational achievements within the framework of the USSR, on the one hand, and the violation of human rights, restrictions on the Georgian language and church, purges, reprisals, civil unrest, nepotism, corruption, bribery, and the violent suppression of any form of dissent, on the other.

References

- Alasania, G. (2006). Twenty centuries of Christianity in Georgia, *IBSU International Refereed Multi-diciplinary Scientific Journal*. pp. 53, 54;
- Alasania, G. (2010). *Twenty Centuries of Christianity in Georgia*, Tbilisi, pp. 52, 53;
- Anchabadze, Yu. D. & Volkova, N. G. (1990). *Staryj Tbilisi. Gorod i gorozhane v XIX veke* [Ancient Tbilisi. The City and Citizens in the 19<sup>th</sup> c.], Moscow. pp. 24, 29;
- Anchabadze, Yu. D. Volkova, N. G. (1980). pp. 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49-50, 51;
- Anti-Soviet plot. (n.d.). Retrieved from [Wikipedia.org/wiki/1941-Anti-Soviet plot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1941-Anti-Soviet_plot);
- Archive. [Security.gov.ge/old\\_site\\_temp/Jvania](http://Security.gov.ge/old_site_temp/Jvania). Html;
- Bakhtadze, M. (2009). *Struggle for the Defence of Tbilisi in 1921 during the Georgian-Russian War*. Tbilisi (in Georgian);
- Chkheidze, R. (2016). *Lonely Wolf and the Swan Nebula*. Tbilisi;
- Gachechiladze, R. (2008). *My 20<sup>th</sup> Century, I*, Tbilisi. p. 71;
- Gega Kobakhidze. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://ka.wikipedia.org/wiki/გეგა\\_კობახიძე](https://ka.wikipedia.org/wiki/გეგა_კობახიძე);
- Guruli, V. Vachnadze, M. Shvelidze, D. Kirtadze, N. Tsotskolauri, A. & Firanishvili, P. (2003). “Artanudji”, *History of Georgia*. XX century. Tbilisi. p. 46;
- Jaoshvili, V. (1984). *Sakartvelos mosakhleoba XVII-XX saukuneebshi* [Population of Georgia in the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> cc.], Tbilisi. pp. 106-107, 108, 140-141;
- Kirtadze, N. (1996). *Uprising of 1924*. Kutaisi. pp. 161-193 (in Georgian);
- Mama Gabrieli. [Saint Gabriel] (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://ka. Wikipedia.org/wiki/მამა\\_გაბრიელი](https://ka.wikipedia.org/wiki/მამა_გაბრიელი);
- Megrelidze, I. Takaishvili, Ek. (1989). *Life and Activities*. Tbilisi, pp. 93-97;
- Meskhia, Sh. Gvritishvili, D. Dumbadze, M. & Surguladze, A. (1958). *Tbilisis Istoria* [History of Tbilisi], Tbilisi. p. 501;
- Potskhveria, J. (2014). *Memuaruli chanatserebi* [Records of Memories], Tbilisi;
- Suny, R. G. (1994). *The Making of the Georgian Nation*. Second edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 178-9;
- Surguladze, A. Surguladze, P. (1991). *History of Georgia*. Tbilisi, pp. 193-194.