



History of Political Journalism: Georgia'S Case (1917-1918 and After 100 Years)

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HISTORY OF POLITICAL JOURNALISM: GEORGIA'S CASE (1917-1918 AND AFTER 100 YEARS, 2017)

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For the researchers of Georgian Political Journalism and Political Opinion, literature and history, the first 20 years of the XX century are not only the epoch of symbolism, realism or political pluralism. In the period, when the First World War was raging, when Russian Bolshevism was threatening one-sixth of the world to “turn it red”, Georgian publicists, writers, and public figures were proclaiming the idea of freedom and were directing their efforts towards reinstatement of independence of Georgia.

1918-1921 was the first period of establishment of the democratic republic in Georgia, which gave rise to the establishment of the statehood based on democratic principles, provided the opportunity of choice to the Georgian population and set the basis for Georgian Parliamentary.

This epoch is remarkable for the history of Georgian journalism. Up to now, a fundamental research paper dwelling upon the role of the democratic periodic press of 1918-1921, or participation of Georgian publicists and writers in the above-referred processes has not been elaborated. The press of that period acquainted us with the balance of political powers, activities of different parties, the opinion of Georgian public, key international players and processes ongoing in Russian and Europe.

Why did we choose to focus our attention on the above referred four newspapers? The reason is simple, as it was due to the rating of the papers and the fact, that all the four newspapers were published by four major political forces: National-democratic party, Social-federalists; “Alioni” group of Social- democrats; and ruling political force – the party of Social- Democrats. Take into consideration the fact that all the four newspapers had different perspective, thus covering different political events from different angles, we can proclaim these periodic editions as representing an important stage of development of democratic press and view them as a standard of expression of freedom, worthy of following the standard, which was initiated by the Generation of Ilia Chavchavadze in the XIX century. At that period, inculcation of democratic

values was the main objective, which could not have been attained without independent statehood.

We hope that the history of Georgian and Regional Journalism shall be enriched with information on one more interesting and less researched period. Our objective is to ensure that there is no gap left in the history of journalism and we aim to unveil the period that the communists have blocked and restricted.

The purpose of present research is to prove that May 26, 1918, is not only within the competence of historians and politicians, but this date is also a result of uncompromised and indefatigable efforts of Georgian journalists and writers, that Georgian press played a decisive role in elaboration and adoption of Declaration of Freedom. It will not be overly ambitious if we state that such approach to a given period is a novelty, and research of history in given context is the first such attempt in the history of Georgian journalism.

Keywords: Independence, Newspapers, Political debates, Russian bolshevism, Key players, Rustavi 2.

Introduction

In the period of 1917-1918, there were published scores of newspapers in Georgian and Russian languages. The press was providing coverage of all political or public events and was calling upon the ruling power of that period to uncompromisingly proclaim the independence of Georgia and find the way out of the midst of a revolution that has enveloped Georgian social-democrats.

Georgian writers and publicists were collaborating with different political parties. In their publications, articles, and essays, they comprehensively dwell on those hardships which were hindering the advance of Georgia towards freedom that was largely preconditioned by activities of political forces and their dissociation. Despite this, three very important occurrences took place at that time. Namely, autocephaly of the Georgian Church was reinstated, the Georgian university was founded, and by the Act of May 26, the independent Georgian state was established.

The press of the 1917-1918 is clearly reflecting the fact that these important events became the subject of heated debates and had wide coverage. It becomes evident from the pages of the press of that time how radically different and inconsistent positions of political forces of that time were, and what major differences were occurring in the principles and strategic objectives of those players. These differences were extremely obvious between the ruling party and the minority.

Our objective is to represent four leading newspapers of that period, which were ‘Sakartvelo’(Georgia), ‘Sakhalkho Sakme’(Public Affair), ‘Alioni’(Dawn) and ‘Ertoba’ (Unity) and dwell upon publicist directions, professional standards and tactic approaches, characteristic to the press of that period, as well as try to identify the trends, that were prevailing in the leading Georgian newspapers, what was the focus, whether the press was characterized by pluralism and whether the society had opportunity of alternative choice. Our objective is to trace how the history of political debates was evolving on the pages of Georgian press and whether the press was adequate to the requirements of Georgian public, what was the role of Georgian publicists and writers in the period of 1918-1921.

Along with analysis of the press, we decided to focus our attention on the authors of that time, as analysis of the authors in given context, has never been conducted before. In-depth analysis of professional standards, analysis, and reflections of such authors, as Grigol Robakidze, Tician Tabidze, Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, Shalva Amirejibi, Samson Pirtskhalava, Vakhtang Kotetishvili, Leo Kiacheli and others, published in Georgian press of that period are extremely interesting.

While Georgian historians more or less paid their respect to the historiography and have filled in the gap of this tabooed period by their research and studies, dedicated to the political history of that period, researchers of Georgian journalism and literature have not duly studied this publicist heritage, which used to be forbidden ground. It is impossible to depict the legacy of Grigol Robakidze, Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, Vakhtang Kotetishvili, Ivane Gomarteli, Leo Kiacheli, Taguna and other writers of that period without analysis of their works published in the press and the Act of May 26, 1918. If it was not for the articles of these authors and their persistent call for the announcement of independence of Georgia, the Constituent Assembly of Georgia could not have adopted the Declaration of Independence of Georgia.

Why did we choose to focus our attention on the above referred four newspapers? The reason is simple, as it was due to the rating of the papers and the fact, that all the four newspapers were published by four major political forces. Thus, ‘Sakartvelo’ (Georgia) was published by National-democratic party; ‘Sakhalkho Sakme’ (Public Issues) – by Social-federalists; ‘Alioni’ (The Dawn) – by ‘Alioni’ group of Social-democrats; and ‘Ertoba’ (Unity) by the ruling political force – the party of Social-Democrats. The fact that a newspaper is an organ representing interests of a certain party, is in itself detracting from the idea of freedom of press, but if we view that period as a whole, and take into consideration the fact that all the four newspapers had different perspective, thus covering different political events from different angles, we can proclaim these periodic editions as representing an important stage of development of democratic press and view them as a standard of expression of

freedom, worthy of following the standard, which was initiated by the Generation of Ilia Chavchavadze in the XIX century. At that period, inculcation of democratic values was the main objective, which could not have been attained without independent statehood.

“SAKARTVELO” (Georgia) – 1917-1918

For the purpose of illustration of the above mentioned, we shall try to dwell a little more amply on the newspaper “Sakartvelo” (Georgia), which was founded on under the auspices of magazine “Klde” (The Rock). The first issue of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” was published on May 24, 1915, under the editorship of Sandro Shanshiashvili. The editorial staff was located in Tbilisi, Moscow Street, 4. The newspaper had 4-6 pages. In the editorial letter of the first issue of the newspaper, the publishers were addressing the readers and reflecting on the fact that they had to issue the newspaper in quite complicated circumstances.

“At that time Western Europe and Georgia were enveloped in the war. Things, that had seemed obvious and beliefs, that were considered as indisputable, were demolished fundamentally in the onslaught of war and roaring of cannons and gunfire. Former political and economic powers and along with them existing ideals and values were demolished, while the substitute for them has not yet established itself clearly. Such situation may undermine the existence of large nations, and it is true even more so in regard to small nations, which do not have sufficient strength for fighting and defending themselves”, - was stated in the program part of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”. Most probably, the author of this address was the editor Sandro Shanshiashvili, as he usually was the author of the editorial columns.

From January 1, 1916, the newspaper “Sakartvelo” became daily “political, economic and literary newspaper”. The touch of censorship is already evident on its pages and some empty spaces indicate to materials that have been restricted from publication. The newspaper still attempts not to deviate from its principles, and each article is permeated with the ideas of freedom and independence.

From 1917 daily political, economic and literary newspaper “Sakartvelo” is officially proclaiming, that the newspaper is “National-democratic” direction.

The newspaper had its own correspondents in major towns and villages, as well as Petrograd and Moscow. By that time the number of staff has increased. One can see names of many outstanding public figures under the publications in the newspaper. Among the editorial staff are Ambrosi Khelaia, A. Asatiani, A. Akhmeteli, V. Barnov, E. Gabashvili, R. Gabashvili, V. Gunia, S. Dadiani, I. Vartagava, G. Veshapeli, E.

Takaishvili, P. Ingorokva, D. Kasradze, bishop Kirion, bishop Leonide, N. Lortkipanidze, K. Makashvili, Dutu Megreli, S. Mghvimeli, N. Nikoladze, G. Robakidze, Tedo Sakhokia, T. Tabidze, G. Kikodze...

In 1917 “Sakartvelo” was still published under the editorship of Sandro Shanshiashvili, but after the 90th issue Grigol Veshapeli became the editor of the newspaper while starting from 1918 – Geronti Kikodze was the editor of the paper.

After the February Revolution in Russia, in the newspaper appeared a column “Georgians, be wise, united and sedate”. In the letter, published under this column we see the same aspirations – freedom and unity of Georgia and a call upon the population for rescuing of the country.

“Sakartvelo” was welcoming the February Revolution of Russia and proclaiming the idea of independence of Georgia. The newspaper believed that free Russia would bring independence to Georgia. Spiridon Kedia writes on the pages of the newspaper: “In the end of February fell the regime, which has treated Georgia so villainously. The Dynasty, which has violated the agreement, concluded with Georgia and brought bloodshed to the country, was exiled. This is an outstanding act. Freedom of speech, of written word, meeting and conscience, this is what Revolution brings; universal suffrage, secret vote and etc, this is what Revolution proclaims. The hierarchy, strengthened and safeguarded through centuries, has been done away with. There will be no people, enjoying advantage and power from birth... Personal dignity, merits, manhood – these are new measures of importance and influence of a person... We are greeting this revolution with rapture. Many long years to the new regime of Russia. But...and that is where difference between Russian and us start to reveal...”

It becomes clear, that prior to the February revolution, newspaper “Sakartvelo” was restraining itself from “revealing” party activities of National-democrats and the organization was acting illegally. It is true, that National-democratic party conducted constituent assembly later and was officially registered, as a political organization, but the nucleus of national-democrats was formed within the ranks of social- federalists during the I World War. With their assistance and efforts, the newspaper “Sakartvelo” was founded, which proclaimed in 1917 that it shared ideas of the national-democratic movement. From the content of the newspaper becomes evident, that it had chosen this direction from the day of its founding. The newspaper was proclaiming the idea of freedom and serving democratic principles. From the words of Spiridon Kedia, it becomes clear, that after the February revolution National-democrats started their official political activities and the newspaper ‘Sakartvelo’ became their periodic organ.

It is interesting what does Spiridon Kedia imply when he talks about differences between Russians and Georgians, namely when he says that “here is when differences between Russians and Georgians start to reveal. We should realize that such differences exist. For liberated Russia, these civil norms are sufficient to take off, express all it veiled power and creativity. For Georgia, this is not sufficient. Civil rights are characteristic to free nations. If the nation does not possess its own government, if the law of the nation is not written by the offspring of the nation, if governance of the nation is in the hands of an alien and not in the hands of its own kin, all civil rights are vain. The soul of the nation shall be confined, its existence restricted, the power of creativity weak and success is impossible . . . That is why to ensure, that it is uniformly beneficial, today’s revolution should, first of all, bring to Georgia national freedom. Revolution shall only then be complete when in free Georgia Georgians shall themselves organize and dispose of its own democratic regime of governance. Georgia could not have started renovation through proclaiming of norms of civil rights but should start from the restoration of its national freedom. This should happen either now or never.”

Newspaper “Sakartvelo” was the first influential periodic organ, which so clearly, comprehensively and validly posed the issue of independent statehood of Georgia and preference of democratic ideals and consequently, the appeal to proclaim the independence of Georgia is permanently voiced in the newspaper.

“Sakartvelo” is impelling the government of Georgia to proclaim independence, requires from the ruling social-democratic party to sever connections with the Bolsheviks and take up sound national footing: “Bolshevism in Russia turned into the synonym of hooliganism, raids, and rejection of anything sound. It has degenerated and the socialist idea gave rise to barbaric anarchy, which in combination with weaknesses of Menshevism destroyed Russia. And at this very time, our ruling party is begging this executioner to come and help us . . . This party is imposing on our nation Bolsheviks ... they have neither means, nor ability to defend us even if they wanted, but they don’t . . .”

It is absolutely clear, that “Sakartvelo” was realizing the threat that Bolshevism posed to our country, and was assessing events realistically. Although it should be stated, that the newspaper also comprehended clearly that safeguarding of the statehood could be possible only through relying on some strong power. It saw the way out in Europe. Member of staff of the paper Tite Margvelashvili states in his publication “Our orientation, that Georgia should orient itself on Germany, as “Germany publicly stated in Brest-Litovsk, that they shall acknowledge the independence of Georgia. Conducting of truce negotiations in Trabzon is another confirmation of this. Consequently, it is clear that our independence and statehood does not interfere with

the plans of the states of the Middle Europe . . . It is of crucial importance for us to enter into economic cooperation with Germany and establishing of our political independence”.

The author of the article considered, that orientation towards Russia and England would not bring political independence to Georgia, as France and Russia would not acknowledge independence of small country under the Russian rule, as their activities would be considered as interference in internal affairs of another state, which from economic standpoint meant further weakening of the nation. So, orientation towards Germany was the only option. As the author of the article stated, this would promote the political independence of the country and improve its economic position, which is why the newspaper was encouraging proclaiming of independence of the country without further delay.

Free statehood is possible, desirable and beneficial for the nation only when it ensures peaceful development of the country, when equality and freedom of citizens are safeguarded, when the law and justice and not violence and discretion, rules the country; when economic development of the nation is promoted. Could Georgia alone build the legal state? Member of staff of the paper A. Asatiani in his

article “Patronage of Germany” states, that for the purpose of formation of strong and sound state different resources are necessary – intellectual, moral, property, political culture, discipline and etc. “We thought, that we possessed all the above referred in excess... which external force can we apply for assistance to build our national statehood and adorn our motherland? The country, which Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Finland have gone to obtain such help – is Germany...Today our national state is partitioned and disintegrated. The body of Georgia is torn into two parts and we don’t know what pieces shall be torn away from the body of the country yet . . . Through budding of German firmness and discipline to our national qualities and directing of economic waves, reaching us from the West towards the desirable direction we shall be able to lay the ground for strong Georgia and maybe our future generations shall witness another Golden Age in Georgia”.

As it becomes evident Georgia was pinning its hopes on Germany and National-democrats, for those who represented right-wing opposition it was clear, that the starting point of building of Georgian statehood was strongly linked to Germany, while Social-democrats were developing plans for federal organization of Georgia, social-federalists and social revolutionaries were developing plans for establishing of Confederation, National-democratic fraction required separation of Georgia from the Transcaucasia and proclaiming of Georgia as independent state.

Day by day, the newspaper was calling on proclaiming of independence of Georgia more persistently and criticizes those who oppose the independence of Georgia. Restoration of independent statehood and inculcation of democratic values are viewed as synonyms. The newspaper places the high emphasis on the discussion on advantages of the democratic regime, civil rights, and freedoms, free choice, impartial judiciary, free economy. Outstanding Georgian writers, publicists, and public figures participated in these debates.

Unexpectedly the army of Ottomans invades Borchalo province. Truce negotiations in Batumi are hampered. Acknowledgment of independence of the Republic of Transcaucasia by leading states was delayed due to different impediments that arose. Ottomans and Germany were in no hurry to promote speedy and successful resolution of negotiations. In such circumstances the newspaper ‘Sakartvelo’ starts to voice its concern: “delays are impossible, those groups, which brought our country to this state are responsible for taking into consideration real demands of life and direct all their efforts and salvage for our people and their future what is left to be salvaged”.

It is evident from the pages of newspaper ‘Sakartvelo’, that several days prior to the adoption of the Independence Act, the government was going with the stream absolutely spontaneously. The newspaper puts the blame on the government for the creation of such situation and thinks that current government has contributed more to this situation than the army of Ottomans and Bolsheviks revolt. The government had no power to protect itself and the country. “Dismantling and disintegration of internal forces, undermining of national integrity on one hand, and failure to take into consideration the external forces – this is what our internal and external policy is characterized by during the last year”.

“Sakartvelo” was the irreconcilable opponent of ruling political forces and requests all parties to refuse from pro-Russian policy, as “the Russian threads are bringing the Ottoman’s army to Georgia, but the Ottomans are persecuting Russian policy in the Caucasus in the same manner, as they are fighting the Russian army”.

The critique becomes more and more fierce before May 26. It is obvious, that the team of people, united around ‘Sakartvelo’ were assessing established political situation correctly and were setting preconditions for proclaiming of independence of Georgia on May 26.

May 26 and ‘Sakartvelo’ (Georgia)

On May 26, 1918, Georgia announced its independence. The newspaper exclusively published the poem of George Leonidze, dedicated to this day. This poem was

unpublished before, as communist censorship had suppressed its publication. This poem of George Leonidze was published in the newspaper immediately when the editorial staff saw it.

On May 27 ‘Sakartvelo’ publishes the text of the Act and rapturously welcomes it. In the editorial column is published an article under the title “Independent Georgia restored!” The article stated the following: “From date independence of the Georgian state is restored. Hale to Georgia and Georgian nation! All parts of Georgia, all layers of Georgian society, all groups shall revere restored the independence of Georgia. . . Georgian people, be it a farmer, worker, craftsman, trader or producer, should all unite themselves for the purpose of building of Georgian state.” In the opinion of the newspaper, the government of independent Georgia should immediately embark on the road of establishing of peaceful relations with the Ottomans and their allies, as well as all neighbor nations. The newspaper does not lose hope, that Germany shall be the political patron of Georgia and shall assist it in the regulation of economic and financial problems that Georgian army shall be strengthened and shall with dignity follow traditions of its celebrated ancestors, shall stand on the guard of Georgian territory, its freedom, and national government.

The article ends up with a call upon the nation: “Sons of Georgia, the freedom of Georgia was conceived in the internal and external wars and raging storms, enveloping the world. Let’s unite us around Georgia to protect and promote its prosperity! Hale to liberated Georgia! Hale to the Georgian nation!”

Along with rapture, independence of Georgia proclaimed on May 26 has brought along numerous concerns. This fact is considered on the pages of the newspaper as paying tribute to the Georgian banner, confirmation of the ideas and directions, that public figures and writers of ‘Sakartvelo’ were reiterating on daily basis. Declaration of independence of Georgia was a precondition for transfer of Georgia to the democratic regime. With the adoption of the Declaration, Georgia has joined the Western world and acknowledged democratic values. Georgian state has announced permanent neutrality in the sphere of international politics. In those times military-political alliances, to which Georgia would have aspired to accede, were not yet formed. The only political aspiration that appeared in Georgian establishment of that time was to join the League of Nations, though this aspiration remained a dream and the League of Nations itself did not last long.

The newspaper considers that the major objective of the elected Parliament was an elaboration of the Constitution and implementation of social reforms. “The life has exhausted the revolutionary path now the floor goes to the parliamentary legislation and evolutionary creativity.” From that day, the newspaper “Sakartvelo” had also

exhausted the revolutionary path, as it has attained what it was fighting for with written word for years. It is clear, that the road that it had passed was not easy. Behind each word, weighted hundred times was huge risk and courage.

After May 26, 1918 ‘Sakartvelo’ focuses on issues related to the building of the statehood and discussions around the need of elaboration of the supreme law of the country – the Constitution. What should Georgian Constitution be like? The newspaper has initiated this discussion even prior to the proclamation of independence and it has dedicated numerous interesting analytical articles after the declaration of independence too.

Articles of Georgian journalists and writers, who have contributed to the introduction of democratic principles, freedom of press and freedom of expression, published on the pages of ‘Sakartvelo’ are extremely interesting. In the newspaper publications, one more important principle is clearly evident. The movement towards the north does not ensure progress and the authors are oriented towards the West. At the same time integration with Europe along with political changes requires huge internal transformation. Are Georgia and each of its citizen ready to dispose of its fate independently and undertake upon himself his share of responsibility? They were not only opponents of the regime of that period but were representing the positive force, which was trying to form new and attractive alternatives in the form of democracy and free relations and was initiators of cooperation with European structures.

Grigol Robakidze in 1917-1918 was actively collaborating with ‘Sakartvelo’ and was a supporter of the National-democratic movement. On the pages of the newspaper, he starts passionate propagation of ‘Europeanized’ culture and the world. Grigol Robakidze does not doubt that Georgia shall be liberated, united and integral. Despite the fact that Georgian are of a rather impulsive character than following sense, he still believes that true and deep feelings shall give rise to different creativity in Georgia. Promotion of formation of ‘truly Georgian style’ is the chief credo of creative work of Grigol Robakidze.

Retaining of all that reveals and strengthens identity for which the country is interesting for the outer world. At the same time development of new relations, the new way of thinking and acknowledgment of values, that shall unite Georgia with a large European family. Political transformation, which shall be extremely difficult but necessary, if we want the state to survive.

Georgia-Europe-Asia – this is a triangle of Robakidze and the crossroad of cultures. Russia, which is enveloped by the anarchy of instincts, which has no strength of

ideas, beliefs, ideals or moral. This bitter reality is closing in on the south, from the north.

The theme of Russia is quite widely covered in the letters of Grigol Robakidze. The author dwells upon all issues, starting from the revolt of Bolsheviks, and ending with the party of social-revolutionaries, which can be related to Georgian reality.

“Sakartvelo” covers the issues related to the frame of mind of Russia and political decisions. That is why Grigol Robakidze along with other Georgian writers depicts the Russia of Dostoevsky and Andrei Biel on one hand, and the Russia in the hands of anarchists on the other hand. These two Russias have always been in conflict with each other and yet supplementing each other.

“Russian by his nature is a Bolshevik. This maximalism is the manifestation of the soul, but yet the Russian nation is strong and gifted. And yet the culture is not the only expression of the soul: “It is the creativity of objects and social characteristics. Russian man resembles the man, who rejected automobile only because he was not offered an airplane and now is dragging on the road in a cart. I assume this example correctly depicts weaknesses of Russia in building its statehood. Russia today is anarchic and by the chaotic flapping of wings is flying around the verge of a brink. It is really doubtful whether Russia shall come as a winner out of these hardships.”

Grigol Robakidze identifies three factors, characterizing Russia of that time: the cadet (bourgeois- democratic), Bolshevik (socialist) and Menshevik. He considers that of all the above listed the strongest element is the Bolsheviks and he admonishes Georgian society: ‘Let’s not be following the fantasies that sprung in the fog of Petrograd. We have our own road to follow and let’s try to collect all our forces not to undermine the idea of national freedom, conceived through revolution and demolish it by anarchy. “

For Grigol Robakidze socialist ideas have false grounds. He considers national-democratic party as the force, representing national interests best. Western culture is attracting him because the persons ‘ego’ is more clearly cut there. In Western mentality, the individualistic approach is prevailing. Individual freedom is the goal of the social ideal. In the opinion of Grigol Robakidze ruling of state on the platform of the psychology of socialism is unacceptable.

Grigol Robakidze dedicated numerous interesting articles to outstanding public figures, writers and historic heroes on the pages of newspaper ‘Sakartvelo’. His extremely interesting essay “Tamar” was published in “Sakartvelo” several days before proclaiming of independence of Georgia.

Queen Tamar, Besiki, Aleksandre Chavchavadze, Giorgi Sharvashidze, Archil Jorjadze, Tician Tabidze, Niko Pirosmiani and others are main heroes of creative work of Grigol Robakidze of that period. Writing about them was serving the main objective – national idea, the idea of independence, as the main essence of individualism and foundation of the state.

The period of collaboration with “Sakartvelo” is the period of shedding of new light on the disposition and attitude of Grigol Robakidze. Individual freedom, overcoming the heavy burden of stereotypes, introducing of criticism, pluralism of ideas and thoughts, analysis of the past not for the sake of being attached to it, but for the purpose of its revisiting and rethinking. Complete reformation and changes. Such is Grigol Robakidze on the pages of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”. His ideas and creative work were also contributing to maturing of the idea of independence in the consciousness of the public.

Tician Tabidze in that period also was actively collaborating with newspaper “Sakartvelo”. His poems, literary essays, and publicist works were published in newspaper “Sakartvelo”. Tician was sending his essays and articles especially for “Sakartvelo” even from Moscow. It is while he was in Moscow, that he wrote a very interesting article about the February revolution of Russia, where he talks about monotonousness and the amazing ability of misrepresentation of historic facts of Russia. In Tician’s publicist essays is reflected the search for new and more liberal Russia.

Tician thinks, that Russia is a puzzle for even Russians themselves, that they are expecting a catastrophe to happen in Russia in the same way as you expect that after each night there is a day to come. The fragility of the February revolution is gradually giving birth to the apparition of the October revolution of Bolsheviks. Russia had to stand the test, and the Georgian poet was anxious to the depths of his soul, as the processes initiated in Moscow were impacting Georgia. He was observing the birth of Russia with huge interest and was reminiscing about the days of French commune.

Tician recall revolutions of France in his letters on numerous occasions, even when he addresses the Georgian writers with his open letter and calls upon them to follow the example of French poets, writers, and artists. Over three hundred gifted French writers and artists have sacrificed their lives to revolution and in France, they have gotten used to the idea, that for 50 years they would face an industrial crisis.

Tician calls upon Georgian writers towards fight and protest. Tician’s call is quite revolutionary. Freedom - this is the goal, towards which all Georgian writers should aspire. “Today’s cruel war has revealed, that there is no other word more sacred and

dear than the word “motherland”. Georgians, who were born and brought up in slavery today have an opportunity to repeat the preface, that the chronicler starts “The Life of Kartli” and which has been proved true by Georgians throughout the long history of the nation”.

– We shall serve as a slave no one except for the God who created us . . .

“Free and happy Georgia shall unite us”

In his publicist essay “The Central Asia” Tician dwells upon the choice of Georgia. He started thinking in this direction after the First National Assembly and he started reminiscing about the national meeting of the Lazs, which was described by the Byzantine writer Agathis. The King Aiet was supporting orientation towards Persia, but an old man Fartats requested the floor and was substantiating, as to why he would support orientation towards old allies – Byzant, as they were culturally more developed, than Persians and had the same religion. “In this historical etching the power of words and the orators are amazing . . . in this etching you see the history of Georgian nation, permanent search for new orientation, as there was no hope of surviving independently. The last king of Georgia and his chancellor Solomon Leonidze were facing this challenge too.”

At the First National Assembly of Georgia, Noe Jordania brought up this issue too. Tician restrains himself from posting the issue from a political angle and is trying to find the way out from general cultural perspective, which anyway brings him to political decisions. For Tician Tabidze, the main knot is in a confrontation between the West and the East. “These maniacs of revolution are quite contemporary barbarians and the biggest hallucinatory of our days is Lenin, who in his revolutionary paroxysm is quite close to Russian Khlysts. .In Russia, the fate of independence of Russia and Europe has been already solved. That “small window”, that Russia has cut into Europe did not allow for a lot of sun rays to penetrate even when it was wide open. While we were always fed on that surrogate that we imported from Russia”.

Tician clearly sees the threat that Russian processes carry. Even in Moscow and Russia, they did not favor those, who were considered as the founders of a new direction. Freedom is a strange fruit for them too, and an additional burden. Russia cannot be an equal partner for Georgia and that is why Georgia should find its own way to independence.

Tician Tabidze was a publicist-fighter and poet-symbolist. He was extremely legible in the assessment of the processes and his articles are characterized by in-depth

analysis. Overcoming of a national problem and the need for revision of literary life – this is end in itself for Tician. Documentary essays, literary-publicist letters and social-political assays of Tician Tabidze are pierced with ideas of freedom and individuality. “The blue antlers” have entered the Georgian literature in an ambitious manner and brought to it their values and individual pathos. Tician’s creativity and press publications are ambitious too. The majority of his political forecasts have come true.

Shalva Amirejibi, another outstanding author of “Sakartvelo”, was a publicist, poet, and an outstanding public figure. He took part in the plot of 1924, due to which he had to leave his motherland and immigrate, where he stayed until his death. Shalva Amirejibi was observing the processes in Russia

with suspicion from the very beginning and was assuming, that whatever Russia plans in regard to the Caucasus “may drag Russian population of the Caucasus into a shady enterprise”.

Shalva Amirejibi welcomed the autocephaly of the Georgian Church, although he had his own opinion in regard to Georgian clergy. Shalva Amirejibi considered that the liberation of the Georgian Church from the clerical dictate of Russia was a major event. He writes, that Georgian culture, architecture, painting, icons “as an example of the supreme form of art, as well as any aspect, that Georgian creativity has reflected” has been liberated from Russian dictate. The writer poses the question, as to what would have happened to Michelangelo’s, Da Vinci’s, Rafael’s imperishable masterpieces and whole Italian Renaissance, “which had found shelter with the church, if this Church had been taken hostage by somebody?!”

Shalva Amirejibi considers that free Georgia should be the arena of activities for free people. An independent country should be served by strong, energetic and knowledgeable people. The more that there are strong personalities, the stronger the state is. He is a supporter of individualism and thus, promotes European model of transformation. The state should rest on strong personalities. He sees as such Valerian Gunia, to whom he dedicated a very interesting publicist essay. Shalva Amirejibi’s versatile pen, the gift of a writer and a publicist makes results of his collaboration with newspaper extremely interesting. In Gunia’s work and efforts he sees the victory of freedom, while he views freedom as the source of inspiration, which makes you attain the impossible:

‘The old Russia has died!
The old Georgia has died!

Only freedom is alive!
And I am meeting the freedom!”

Shalva Amirejibi was respecting individual gift and strong personalities, active people, the talent of which made them act in their everyday life and was feeding their souls. Such people view their individual talent, not as a museum or an immovable exhibit, but apply their talent to daily life and are the leaders of the society. Only such people shall lead Georgia to independence and freedom.

Shalva Amirejibi was calling upon such creativity not only to Georgian writers and artists but the government too. Ten days before the proclamation of independence he wrote an extremely interesting article under the title “The Constitution” (86), where he forecasted the future processes much earlier than outstanding Georgian politicians. Shalva Amirejibi is disappointed; the National Council of Georgia discusses the issue of the basis of the constitution under compulsion and with the lack of enthusiasm, and “they are not seized by courageous ideas, prompted by the desire of elaboration of the Magna Carta”. He has been waiting for an elaboration of the Carta Magna by the government for a long while. He is not very surprised, as the independence of Georgia was proclaimed by those people who did not aspire for national freedom, consequently, May 26 was not the outcome of their struggle and victory, but a compulsory step. While for Georgian artists and writers May 26 was the source of inspiration. The ruling party did not even fully realize the importance of the event.

Shalva Amirejibi is extremely concerned by those unprepared and unforeseen processes, which social-democrats imposed on Georgia. The voice of authors of “Sakartvelo” was not sufficient for the awakening of Georgian Mensheviks. Social-democrats by their mental and spiritual state did not agree with the declaration of independence of Georgia and that is why they seemed to be talking different languages.

Thus, newspaper ‘Sakartvelo’ represented a Tribune, on the pages of which the idea of the independence of Georgia was ripening. This idea was one which allowed Georgian society to dream of freedom and bring political forces to the acknowledgement of political freedom. Their supraliminal aspiration towards freedom was crowned by the Declaration of May 26.

“ALIONI” (The Dawn)– 1917-1918

For the purpose of illustration of the above mentioned, we shall try to dwell a little more amply on the newspaper “Alioni.” The first issue of the newspaper “Alioni” was published on May 1, 1917, under the editorship of Pavle Sakvarelidze and the

newspaper was referring to itself as a political-literary publication. At initial stage “Alioni” was the organ of Russian Social-democratic party. Starting from 1918 it became periodical of the group of Georgian Social-democrats. Starting from the first issue and till the last issue the newspaper had the motto “Proletarians of all countries unite!”

Publisher of “Alioni” was L. Sanadze. The newspaper had four pages and was issued twice a week on Thursdays and Sundays. Altogether 110 issues of “Alioni” were published (From May of 1917 till October of 1918). I. Gomarteli, L. Kiacheli, Sh. Sharashidze (Taguna), S. Taifuni, S. Abasheli, V. Burjanadze, D. Chkeidze (Turdospireli), D. Suliashvili (Likheli), V. Rukhadze, P. Rushaveli, I. Rukadze, N. Sakareli, N. Chikvadze, S. Chanturishvili, I. Japaridze, I. Kheladze, V. Malakiashvili, G. Tabidze, K. Sharashidze, T. Ianeli, A. Rukhadze and other were corroborating with the newspaper closely.

The main issue, discussed on the pages of “Alioni” was the national issue. From publications of the newspaper, the process of formation of the national issue in the social-democratic party becomes evident. The group of “Alioni” was developing its standpoint on the national issue gradually but persuasively. It is interesting to trace, as to how the newspaper “Alioni” came to the idea of independence of the statehood of Georgia, how many times it has undergone transformations due to which it has been disfavored by the members of the party.

The national issue, i.e. the issue of independence of the statehood of Georgia was viewed by Social- democrats as “invention of the bourgeoisie”. We should from the very start differentiate the perceptions related to the national issue of that period from today’s interpretation of nationalism. These are two different concepts. For the state, which has lost its independent statehood the national issue is associated with the reinstatement of independence of the state, with independent governance, when you yourself dispose of your fate and nothing is imposed on you from the outside. While already independent state, which is saying the flag of nationalism becomes is in a confrontation with those values, which are inculcated by liberal democracy. If in present work we focus our attention on national issues, we do it solely due to the fact, that starting from 1801 Georgia has been striving for the restoration of independence of its statehood.

From the very first day of establishment, the Social-Democrats had been involved in heated debates with the national-liberation movement. Polemics between Noe Zhordania and Ilia Chavchavadze, which occurred in 1900 is confirmation of the abovementioned. Social-Democrats, carried away with fighting and debating with national movements have rejected everything, which had national content. The

Social- Democrats of Georgia were seized by nihilism in regard to the national issue. Social-democrats were sure, that there were no relevant issues, except for socialism, democratic republic, 8-hour working day and agrarian issue. When Georgian Federalists posed the national issue, Social-democrats were meeting this standpoint with a derisive smile; what is the sense of bringing up of the national issue, as if revolution wins, the national issue shall be resolved.

Thus, Georgian Social-democrats were not interested in the national issue, were considering it as a part of the class issue and considered that separation of this issue was the expression of nationalism. Despite this, the time was passing and gradually the idea of self-determination started to mature in the minds of part of Social-democrats.

Newspaper “Alioni”, which has already elaborated its own concept and approach towards independence of Georgia was operating in the background of such ideological heritage.

In the editorial of the first issue of “Alioni”, we see welcoming words in regard to February Revolution of 1917 of Russia. The newspaper is pinning large hopes on the Revolution: “Our newspaper is published in an amazing period. The Russian people have sparked the fire of Revolution, have overthrown the predatory regime and have embarked on the building of new free life. In the process of Revolution was born the new provisional government/ Two centers, two powers, two directions appeared. The government is representing interests of the liberal and democratic bourgeoisie. Revolutionary

democracy in the person of the council does not support it, as it has its own way and shall not betray the ideals of Revolution”.

“Alioni” stakes on the success of February Revolution, which is understandable. Today it is clear to everyone, that if the February Revolution’s victory was ultimate, perhaps everybody could have evaded ensuing terror. “Alioni” expresses readiness to cooperate and promote their requirements clearly and comprehensively:

“All small and subjugated nations should unite and energetically support their tactics, their statements to ensure that in future the idea of national independence shall be acknowledged universally. I am sure, that the Georgian nation shall not deviate from this route and when supported revolution shall start resolving the fate of different nations at its Constituent Assembly, it can not fail to remember the issue of Georgian nation and shall grant to Georgia national-territorial self-governance”.

National-territorial self-governance – this is the main topic and working program of “Alioni”. We would also like to state, that “Alioni” staff considered themselves as followers of Vladimir (Lado) Darchiashvili. Lado Darchiashvili was the first social-democrat, who in the break of the XXth century was proclaiming the need for broad autonomy for Georgia. Lado Darchiashvili’s follower’s publicist works were focused around the idea of national-territorial autonomy.

In the first issue of the newspaper was published a very interesting article of K. Kavtaradze under the title of “Russian revolution and our tactics”. The author states, that fight against the regime of the Romanovs has started from the Decembrists and later on, with the intrusion of capitalism in our countries it becomes systemic and fierce. The author of the article is not satisfied with activities of the bourgeoisie. He thinks that politically it is not possessing adequate skills and is not flexible, although he can not find the answers for reasons of such infantilism of the bourgeois class: “Political program of the bourgeoisie is radical by its spirit, while in their activities this class is weak and cowardly. In France Miro, Robespierre, Dalton and other were born within the ranks of this class, while with us there are only Miliukov-Maklakovs. What is the reason for that? What transformed our bourgeoisie and changed its psyche?”.

The first issue of “Alioni” starts with series of articles on the subject of ‘Russia and small nations’. The article was published by the author under the pseudonym “P.K”. In the preface of the article, it speaks as to how the revolution has activated and involved all classes and layers of the society into the ongoing processes. The temple of freedom should be erected on the old ruins and new Russia should evolve from these transformations. According to the author, these events along with many others have given rise to discussions around the national issue. It is true, that all nations should make their contribution into the most important deed, which is called “freedom of nations”, but at the same time the “nation should not be forgetting its own national concerns, ignore own pain and needs and fail to ensure its own the national revival”.

These articles dwell upon national-liberation movements of Poland, Finland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belorussia, Armenia, and others.

In the first issue of “Alioni” under the rubric ‘Revolution and national issue in our country’ is starting the series of articles of the editor Pavle Sakvarelidze. The standpoint of the author can be considered as the main concept and direction of the newspaper and Georgian social-democrats. In the first article of Pavle Sakvarelidze, we read: “Changing of the condition of numerous nations, subjugated to Russia, their cultural-political liberation, seeking radical solutions to national issues – should be one of the main tasks and objectives of Russian Revolution. Democratic Republic,

issue of peasants, 8 hour working day, regulation of national issues – this is what revolution should bring to us...Free nations in free Russia – Russian revolution can not evade finding answers to these questions. . . If the Revolution fails and the reactionaries win, they will slaughter freedom and we should forever forget even thinking about liberation and autonomy”.

Pavle Sakvarelidze admits, that the social-democratic party does not favor national issues and try to solve them in an ambiguous manner and hastily. The need for self-determination and regulation of national issue has never been so urgent, as today. Pavle Sakvarelidze considers, that according to Lado Darchiashvili this was the main drawback of the party and was warning every one of the needs of development of sound national program; “We did not take the national issue close to the heart, as for the party there were other issues, which were more important. This issue seemed to be a headache and source of arguments for only several of us; it was considered as an issue, to be solved and aligned by some public organ, something was hindering of broad overview or extrapolation of the issue and promoting to further strengthening of incorrect approach and primitive comprehension”.

In the meantime, Revolution broke out, political, social and national issues were facing the country. Georgian social democrats still considered, that posing of the national issue was premature, arguing, that he may hinder revolution. Newspaper “Alioni” bravely proclaims: “The national issue should be solved either now or never. This is our duty as social-democrats. This is required by the current interests and the future of democracy”.

According to Pavle Sakvarelidze in the international democracy were born two approaches towards the nation and nationalism. One is nihilistic and refuting, while the other is an international direction. Those who reject the national issue, are mainly basing their thinking on the words from the ‘Communist Manifest’ that “proletarian don’t have a motherland”. In the opinion of the author in the Manifest, this phrase is provided for the purpose of giving rise to polemics against bourgeoisie ideologists, who preach that the workers want to do away with the concept of motherland and family.

In his article, the author for the purpose of providing interpretations for the concepts of the nation, independence and freedom recall letters of famous socialists Bebel and Jorge and parliamentary speeches on these issues. First was a Marxists, while the second was not, although in regard to these issues they had similar ideas. The responsibility of the proletariat is to ensure the independence of the motherland because they want to turn their motherland into the motherland of workers– said Bebel. ‘We should protect our motherland and our nation at the times of vicissitudes

of fate. We want to see our nation and motherland as the model for other, the model of perfection and fairness”.

“Generalized motherland, the liberated nation in liberated mankind” – this is the way out in Bebel’s opinion. According to the author of the article Jones believed, that nation, independence of the motherland and social emancipation is inseparable. The working class shall always defend its motherland, but it can not be deceived by those, who try to manipulate with the idea of motherland for their narrow class interests. The working class wants to see its nation free, motherland generalized and socialize. Noe Zhordania wrote: However strong disunity between classes may be, there is such borderline, “where the fighters shall unite and pull under the same cultural and historical harness. This creates what we call a nation, national power. This is the common boundary, beyond which there are other nations. Within this boundary, there are different classes, around which is formed national culture and a national building is erected”.

Pavel Sakvarelidze separated three main directions in the ranks of Georgian social-democrats in regard to the national idea. The first direction by its nature is nihilistic. Their followers ascribe national idea to bourgeoisie mentality and policy. He insisted that national issue was a fodder, proposed by the bourgeoisie and we should not go anywhere close to it. This direction is adhering to party and faction traditions and party discipline. (F. Makharadze and his followers from the editorial staff of “Caucasus workers”). In their opinion in conditions of modern capitalism and fight between the classes, small nations get eliminated.

The second direction is followers of Austrian thinkers Bauer and Springer, who promoted the idea of the ex-territorial character of nations and as a way of solving of national issue consider national-cultural autonomy (N. Zhordania and Naridze). National-territorial autonomy was proclaimed as the main basis for the program at the Conference of social-democratic organizations of the Caucasus. This was the aspiration of one of the groups, known under the name of “Dasi”. They had their own approach, according to which nations do not get exterminated, but they get dispersed. Newspaper “Alioni” does not agree with Springer’s standpoint, according to which the nation is a purely cultural phenomenon and is not related to territory in any manner. A nation is a spiritual and not territorial unity. According to Naridze being Georgian is inseparable from Georgia. But the intervention of capitalism in Georgia has changed the situation: ‘Georgians went beyond Georgia, scattered around the Caucasus, the Black sea, even the Far East. On the other hand, numerous foreign nations came to Georgia. They started being involved in trade and labor, while those foreign nations, whom Georgia has embraced long time ago,

have separated from Georgians and developed their own culture. Georgians got mixed into the melting pot and other nations got mixed with the Georgian culture too. Georgia does not mean only Georgians anymore”.

This direction differs from the first by the idea of a nation not dying, but getting merged economically, while culturally they develop in this merger. Naridze concludes: “Separation of national ideas from the state interests is the only means for reduction of national struggle and free development of national cultures”.

Nations have to take care of cultural sphere, separated from the state autonomously. This is national- cultural autonomy. In the opinion of representatives of ‘Alioni’ contributors, such autonomy provides weak guarantees for the protection of rights of nations and ensuring its cultural and public development. Naridze refutes his previous position himself and speaks of the need of territorial-national governance.

The third direction takes its beginning from **Vladimir Darchiashvili**. He bases his ideas on the importance of territorial principle for solving of the national issue. Ivane Gomarteli and Akaki Chkenkeli were of the same opinion while they were supporters of Russian social-democrat party. Anchin (Akaki Chkenkeli) in his book ‘Nation and us’ talks of the existence of the fourth direction as well. This direction supports broad self-governance, while the cultural-national or personal principle is included on its agenda as a correction for ensuring the safeguarding of rights of ethnic minorities. In the national program of Anchin is included the principle of territorialism of a nation and self-governance of internal issues, which is the leading principle for him.

Territorial principle is the one, in regard to which Lado Darchiashvili, Akaki Chkenkeli, and Alioni group have the same approach. Noe Zhordania shared their ideas in the end as well. According to this direction along with the development of capitalist relations parties and nations start evolving, waking up, get stronger culturally and nationally and try to organize and regulate existence of their nations themselves and govern their national issues.

Lado Darchiashvili was the supporter of complete territorial autonomy. Akaki Chkenkeli does not agree with Lado Darchiashvili on this issue. He calls Lado Darchiashvili’s standpoint vague and associates it with social-federalist direction. Pavle Sakvarelidze does not agree with Akaki Chkenkeli, as national self-governance implies state principle towards cultural issues.

At the Congress of Workers of the Caucasus (June of 1917), Noe Zhordania made a speech on the national issue. The Congress adopted a resolution, which was acknowledging territorial self-governance of nations of the Caucasus. “Alioni” was

expressing its discontent at this decision and called autonomy, proclaimed by resolution as “shy and abridged autonomy”. The newspaper stated: “we are supporters of democratic autonomy, which is broader and more comprehensive”.

Despite this, the newspaper supported first steps of social-democrats and was expecting a second more comprehensive step from it. In his article Pavle Sakvarelidze is talking about his unswerving support to ideas, proclaimed by the paper: ‘We do not agree with the idea of separation and support the idea of national-territorial self-governance of Georgia, i.e. autonomy in democratic republican Russia”.

Pavle Sakvarelidze clearly stated in his article ‘Revolution and national issue in our interpretation” as to what the newspaper and group of social-democrats were propagating, fighting for or requiring. Alioni expresses its concern as it was requiring from activists of the Revolution to act in a more sustainable and comprehensive manner. Thus, the newspaper was considering, that polemics around the national issue, which was raging between the parties was hindering the establishment of democratic rule. “The parties should come to the agreement on this issue as soon as possible and present to the Georgian nation their uniform and acceptable approach. Then the people shall sigh with relief and shall focus their attention on the revival of democracy”.

On October 25 of 1917, the Bolsheviks have conducted a counterrevolutionary coup and Alioni has lost all its hopes. The scope of the red terror could not have been forecasted even by Alioni staff. The only hope they had was the Constituent Assembly of Russia and they realized, that seeking solutions to the national issue should be initiated by the social-democrats first, which in its turn would have made reaching an agreement between parties possible. The newspaper had to face numerous controversies the party members, as well as with the readers. Vano, a tobacco producer was writing: ‘Autonomist-social-democrats, the slogan of your paper is “Proletarians of all countries unite! While your articles talk only of Georgia.” The response of the newspaper was interesting too: “Let them unite in their countries, this is what the slogan means!”

Social-democrats were gradually shaking off dogmatic ideas. All circles of Georgian society were united under the idea of national-territorial self-determination, starting from social-federalists, national- democrats, ending with social-democrats. Unity of Georgian political specter was not disrupted even by the controversy in the sphere of defining competencies of the Legislative organ (except for Bolsheviks). The newspaper considered this fact as a victory of the public opinion. Alioni was calling upon the press and especially so upon newspaper ‘Ertoba” to lobby the national issue more actively. Alioni did not speak much of Bolsheviks, as they were considered as

the most regressive force and did not think it expedient to enter into political debates with them. Although it should be noted, that later on this very force will be the one, which shall subjugate Georgia to Russia, while the forces, which were rejecting an alliance with them, will have to flee from Georgia.

Articles of Ivane Gomarтели, published on the pages of the newspaper are extremely interesting too. He was the author of the following articles: "National and International politics", "Rights and freedoms of nations", "National issue and revolution", "Nations of the Caucasus and the Seim", "To Georgian nation", "External and internal enemies", "Bitter reality", "Our condition", "Lenin", "The commander-in-chief Kirilenko", "Abkhazians and us", "Adjara". Publicist works of Ivane Gomarтели is a topic of separate research. He wrote in very comprehensible language, simply, beautifully and was characterized by depth of thought. He defended his standpoint easily and professionally. It is impossible not to dwell upon his letters, as the newspaper started its existence with very interesting interpretations of Pavle Sakvarelidze and continued with no less interesting publicist works of Ivane Gomarтели.

Ivane Gomarтели was one of the first, who on the pages of *Alioni* was speaking and substantiating weaknesses of Kerensky's government and forecasted the civil war in Russia. "For those, who are real Democrats or social-democrats it is clear and undoubted, that in today's circumstances there are such questions, that should be decided by the nation as a whole and not one party, however strong it may be. Party is a party and not the whole nation".

Ivane Gomarтели was supporting the idea of the convening of the National Assembly of Georgia to allow the opportunity to Georgian people to express their opinion. Ivane Gomarтели considered that some party may oppose to the idea of autonomy, but may maintain national policy anyway. Some party may be supporting the idea of autonomy, but may not maintain national policy at all (38). According to Ivane Gomarтели as an example of such may serve the Menshevik party, which adopted the idea of national- territorial self-governance, but did not pursue a national policy at all. It should be stated, that this quite strong party was trusted by a large number of Georgian people.

"How should we view the national policy today?" – Ivane Gomarтели poses the question and provides a response to it: "In current conditions, the national policy represents all those means and leverages, which shall allow the Georgian nation to survive and win. It represents all those requirements, which are necessary for the prosperity of Georgian nation. Revolution may win but the Georgian nation may lose. How? By refuting of rights of nations, relations between nations and anarchy".

The author of the article explains to Bolsheviks: “Equality of nations is the civil right, national freedom of nations is the state right. .I don’t want to say, that Georgians should sacrifice revolution to national rights. No, Georgian nation should serve Revolution faithfully, as there is no salvation for Georgia without revolution. At the same time we should remember our interests, otherwise, we may forget them altogether . . .”

How should Georgians interpret national freedom? Asks Ivane Gomarтели and answers the question: “I want to remind you words of Pridon: I wish I had the power to desire. Complete independence is the thing to aspire for all dependent nations. For attaining of the desired, you need power. The nation should have a power to fight and obtain complete independence. Even this is not sufficient. The nation should have the ability to live independently”.

The author of the article does not think complete separation and independence of Georgia expedient, which he explains by the fact, that numerically Georgians are few. Ivane Gomarтели does not approve of

the idea of establishing of the Caucasus republic, as the Caucasus nations differ from each other by culture, traditions, religion and etc. Ivane Gomarтели concludes: “Georgians want to receive complete political autonomy and simultaneously remain under the patronage of Russia. The Georgian nation has one primary responsibility: fight for national independence and gain freedom.

Ivane Gomarтели considers the year 1917 as the year of national self-determination and restoration. According to him, working class is the most national class, while ‘the government of Lenin and Trotsky by its actions is the complete rejection of democratic direction. It does not matter does Russia have Tsar Nikolai as an oppressor, or Lenin and Trotsky. The latter is wearing the fur coat of socialism, but under that fur coat it is hiding the same violence and desire to oppress people, as in the Period of The Tsar.”

The issue of independence of Georgian statehood was gradually covered on the pages of Alioni starting from 1918. Russia has disintegrated, Bolsheviks dispersed the Constituent Assembly, executed the Manifesto and strengthened their position through violence. The Alioni group thought, that they should be expecting more outrageous things, for which they are not ready. Even Alioni group did not think that complete independence is conceivable, but it was any way advising everybody to shake off the daze and collect forces. ‘Russia has disintegrated and there is no common center now that is why we may have to proclaim the independence of Georgia. This is not what we aspire for, as currently, Georgia can not survive

independently. Despite this life often imposes on us something that we don't welcome".

Alioni considered it necessary to conduct Constituent Assembly of Georgia, which would dispose of the country's fate: "The interests of our country and our nation prompt us, that we should try to save ourselves from this ordeal, defend our freedom, integrity, our territory. The time has come, when the nation should take care of itself and organize the internal life of the country according to its own liking and lead the life of the nation through its representatives".

Although somewhat at a late date, the newspaper still came to conclusion, that the Georgian nation should decide itself the issue of independence of Georgia. Ivane Gomarтели considered it expedient to convene the Seim of the Caucasus nations, while regulation of the national life should be the competence of the Constituent Assembly of each nation.

In 1918 on the pages of Alioni appears a new slogan: "Free Georgia in Free Caucasus!" Ivane Gomarтели was explaining the content of freedom and its necessity: "When there is no freedom, national activities are slackening up, the soul of the nation is overtaken by disease, the nation itself gradually extinguishes and dies . . . Our whole history is fighting for freedom and the Georgians have never sacrificed so much to any god, as they have sacrificed for freedom. . . This is a remarkable period in our history, the most important second of our existence, our being or not being, we either remain slaves and die or let nobody snatch away from our freedom, that the fate and history are offering us. . . We should create and attain for national freedom, the Georgian nation should be completely free and independent on its own territory. We should erect the flag, unite everybody around that flag and proclaim that we have obtained freedom and today we are an independent and free nation."

The article of Ivane Gomarтели was the turning point in the direction of the newspaper. Alioni started the more active struggle for independence of the country. It seemed as if words of Ivane Gomarтели broke through the fortifications and the thirst for freedom burst out suddenly. Georgian social-democrats started transformation and this should be primarily attributed to Alioni group.

The Seim of the Caucasus did not bring what Alioni was hoping for. In its evaluation of events, the newspaper became quite similar to 'Sakartvelo'. Alioni became more demanding and categorical and was requiring immediate proclamation of independence of the Caucasus.

Alioni considered political orientation as the main precondition for survival of the country. They thought of Germany as the defendant of Georgia, as the World War has increased the power of Germany and its allies, which can also be ascribed to the national features of Germans nation, amazing strength of will and discipline. According to Alioni Germany should undertake upon itself ensuring the political and physical survival of Georgia.

Delays in negotiations with the Ottomans (May of 1918) have made a lot of politicians open their eyes. The government of Georgia and the Transcaucasian republic were pursuing pale policy. Ivane Gomarтели wrote: "A nation may lose in the fight for freedom, but if it does not realize, that it has to fight for freedom if it does not fight for freedom, it does not deserve to be free. A nation may be beaten if it fight for independent existence, but if it does not comprehend, what the national independence means for it, such nation is not worthy of existence, it should extinguish so that it gives place to a better nation".

As we see Alioni is becoming categorical. It is obvious, that Alioni considers the purpose of a nation fight for independence.

On May 26, 1918, Georgia has proclaimed its independence.

In May 1918 Alioni was not published, the reason is unknown.

On July 8 the newspaper greets elatedly this event. N. Eliani in his article "Our condition" says the

following: "In the period of our temporary and imposed literary silence in the history of Georgian nation occurred a very important event. Independence was proclaimed. When they insist, that Georgia did not want independence and freedom, that it has been imposed on us, they arbitrarily or automatically diminish important of the freedom act, weaken the soul and influence of the new state, annihilate the immune right to self-determination. Declaration of independence of Georgia is a historical necessity".

The author talks about the chief concern – as in what ways and how the independent existence should be preserved. He indicates to the anarchy, which is raging in different parts of Georgia, which undermines independence. N. Eliani considers that Bolshevik-blackshirts movement and the black revolt are directed against independence and freedom. He does not approve of repressions and calls upon the government to be involved in positive and sound activities.

Such is the disposition of Alioni and that joy, which was crowned by May 26. This was the way, that brought Alioni to the idea of reinstatement of independence of

Georgian statehood, characterized by fighting, sometimes disappointment of hopes, diversity of opinions, efforts, and dedication to the national idea. Today it is not important as to which political model the Alioni group was supporting. The most important are that Alioni was reflecting and showing to one part of the society its approach towards internal or external policy and ongoing processes. It offered interesting discussion and analysis on the issue of organization of the country, drew interesting parallels with European democracies and as to orientation, Alioni was also considering Germany as the possible defender, as it thinks, that cooperation with Germany would remove Georgia from Russia.

Ivane Gomarteli – physician, scientist, literary, public figure and the patriot of his country, signs the Act of Independence of Georgia on May 26, 1918, as a member of the Constituent Assembly. (3). He is one of the founders and activists of Alioni group of social-democrats. Apart from writing political articles in Alioni, Ivane Gomarteli was also publishing literary essays and scientific works. He sympathizes with “The children of labor” and deals with everybody, who is against the independence of Georgia. He does not want to see the Independent Georgia, where a person shall not be appreciated, where the fruits of his labor shall not be noticed. In his article “To the child of labor” each word of the author is saturated with sadness and sympathy.

At the initial stage, political autonomy was a dream for Ivane Gomarteli, as he could not have imagined, that there was only one year separating them from the independence of Georgia. He was sure, that in conditions of political autonomy a person has more opportunities and breathes freely.

Every sentence of Ivane Gomarteli has the function of a transparency and reminds the reader of human rights and responsibilities. He considers that society should be strong and demanding. No government shall think of people unless the society requires from it accountability and protection of its rights. In Georgia, every citizen was suffering from the perception of lack of rights. Nobody remembered fundamental rights in Georgia and Ivane Gomarteli made it his job to remind people of that. Sometimes he was not understood, his ideas were not shared that is why he was so uncompromising towards the part of society, which was not fighting for civil rights.

Ivane Gomarteli considers that people need to be permanently reminded as to what way it has passed and what happened to it throughout history and what example the past has left for us. He is not satisfied with the level of readiness of Georgian society for freedom. When Europe facing the worst times and was engulfed by the flames of war, in Georgia a lot depended on Georgians.

Ivane Gomarтели's publicist portrait of V. Lenin is extremely interesting. Politicians of that period failed to evaluate Lenin in the way that Ivane Gomarтели does. He explains very clearly to Georgian

people as to what kind of leader and disaster they had to deal with. Who is Lenin? – his words, deeds, and objectives are incompatible. He was fighting with the oppression and established on its ruins a real oppression. He was aspiring towards freedom and then did away with, trampled and squandered the freedom. Instead of happiness and prosperity of people, he established anarchy and raided population. He was dreaming of justice although he established injustice and violence.

“He started his activities from scientific realism and ended up with utopism. He met his sunrise with the Name of Marx and his sunset with Blank. By nature, he was full of controversies. His name was used by the extreme left-wing, extreme right-wing, extreme socialists and extreme monarchists. Among his followers were extreme idealists and real hooligans and blasckhirtists. The oppressed were dreaming that Lenin shall bring them universal happiness and rescue them, while the oppressors were congratulating each other: Thanks to Lenin our time shall come again”.

Ivane Gomarтели considers, that Lenin wanted to demolish monarchy and bourgeoisie while he demolished republic by his deeds. While evaluating Lenin Ivane Gomarтели stresses as to what consequences may be resulting from decisions of obsessed and ignorant people. Lenin's activities brought Russia to despair, while his socialism was understood by Russia as a senseless and inhuman slaughter of the opponents. Ivane Gomarтели was one of the first, who understood the psychological portrait of Lenin and came up with the soundest evaluations of the Leader of Russia. The author feels that Georgia shall not be able to evade the red terror and is trying to warn his compatriots. Despite this Lenin still found support in Georgia.

Ivane Gomarтели's political essay “Commander-in-chief Kirilenko” is of similar character. This letter is more ironic and saturated with sarcasm. The author talks about the role of Kirilenko in Russian politics and stresses his actions, by which he was remembered by people.

“The French revolution gave birth to Napoleon, while Russian revolution gave birth to Kirilenko. There has never been Commander-in-chief like him, and shall never be unless Russians come up with somebody new. All countries and all nations created something. Russia created Kirilenko. In his turn, Kirilenko “glorified” Russia: he contributed to the defeat, he demolished it so strongly and cruelly, as no commander has ever defeated it. . . Poor Russia! Its history was full of controversies and nor Kirilenko added up to it”.

Proclamation of independence of Georgia was becoming more and more burning issue. Russia had its own problems and had no time for other nations. Alioni group similarly to “Sakartvelo” is pushing the government to proclaim independence. Ivane Gomarteli was the first to voice this requirement in the newspaper of social-democratic direction and thus, talks of the need for amendment of political orientation started.

Ivane Gomarteli picturesquely intensifies description of the state, that the Georgian nation found itself in and its aspiration for freedom. Georgia was enslaved for 117 years and it was gloomy, with tears in its eyes and helpless. Despite this Georgia never ceased dreaming and now the time of those dreams to come true.

“Georgia can’t help but have the flag of freedom stream. The flag of freedom should stream over Georgia!”. Such was the verdict of Ivane Gomarteli. If in 1917 he speaks more modestly about the independence of Georgia, starting from 1918 he liberates himself from the party doctrines and gives example to Alioni group as to how to come to new decisions and is sure, that they shall all turn into heroes if the motherland needs their sacrifice.

Such state of spirit of Ivane Gomarteli was also preconditioned by the fact, that he was the close friend of Akaki Tsereteli and Giorgi Tsereteli. (53). Giorgi Tsereteli assigned Ivane Gomarteli as the head of the column of critique of newspaper “Kvali”, which was an official printed organ of the “Third Dasi” in 1898. He like George Tsereteli did not agree with those, who were insisting that “as I am a socialist or a social democrat, or DASI representative, for me the national issue does not exist” (“Temi”1913, no1, page 150). Closeness with social-democrats did not hinder him from sharing ideas of “Tergdaleulis”. Physician Gomarteli was taking care of the physical health of people, while writer and publicist Gomarteli was offering them political education and democratic ideas.

He considered that his venue was talking the truth and was calling upon everybody to write in such way, that the society would benefit from their works. Ivane Gomarteli’s viewpoints have undergone transformation several times too, especially after events of 1917-1918. He was the one, who realized, that in national issue social-democrats have chosen the wrong direction and would later say: “Complete, unlimited and comprehensive Freedom “.

On May 26, 1918, he personally signed the Declaration of freedom.

Taguna (Shalva Sharashidze) was another outstanding author of Alioni. He was publishing interesting feuilletons in newspaper “Sakhalkho Sakme” under this

pseudonym. The choice of the author to cover events of that time with humor and satire is very interesting. Taguna mainly speaks of political organization of the country and is criticizing everybody, who opposes to the idea of independence of Georgia, who does not agree to structures, set up by Georgians. Taguna in the same manner as his colleagues and supporters was initially supporting the principle of federalism.

His letter ‘Bespectacled and without spectacles’ tells of an assembly, which is divided into two parts, which was caused by an interparty bureau. “Bespectacled comrades swooped the interparty bureau like kites, while comrades without spectacles although timidly, but still tried to protect it. Initially, I could not understand what weak standpoint had to do with this issue and why spectacles became attribute for those, who were criticizing the interparty bureau. But when the arguments started, and the bespectacled brought out all their documents, I realized that shortsightedness did affect their thinking on this issue”.

Taguna criticizes socialists in power, who decided to reconcile parties, although they did not want to cooperate closely with parties.

Taguna reminds them as to how they adopted the national program forcibly, publicly proclaimed “Victory to national-territorial self-governance”, while have not implemented any actions for bringing it into life. In “Bespectacled comrades” he sees weak people devoid of national ideas, who shout one thing and do another: “They are like that clock, the hands of which show twelve thirty, while it rings twelve times”. Taguna does not think high of these bespectacled comrades and thinks they can never stand on national grounds.

Taguna was criticizing another group of social-democrats too. In his essay ‘Autonomists too’ Taguna distinguished three groups of social-democrats. All the three have a different attitude towards the national issue. These are Nihilists, Alioni group, and Ertoba group. Taguna very skillfully provided the description of differences between them. They were not interested in the national issue and they resemble a hero of Japanese fairy tale, who did not have nose, mouth or eyes. There was just one horrifying naked roundness, which was intimidating everybody. For Taguna social-democrats were such mediocrities, who wear the mask of territorial self-governance, while as soon as it comes practical steps and conducting of national policy, this mask falls off their faces immediately. The cause of Tagunas frustration was a letter published in newspaper “Ertoba” (#177, 1917) where social-democrats along with other models of state arrangements have considered the model of “autonomy as well” and immediately tried to discard this issue lightly.

Taguna advises them to remove from the word combination “autonomy as well” the second word and require just autonomy. (203). Taguna does not leave the fight between ‘Brdzola’ (Fight, Bolshevik organ) and Alioni without comments. Taguna’s characterizing of Bolsheviks is very interesting: “Lance a Bolshevik, you may choose him randomly, if you like it may be our Tevdore Kalandadze (if of course, international proletariat sacrifices him for that cause) and below the liver, rights near the spleen you shall see a quite large organ, which a usual person, who is not a Bolshevik does not have. In the same manner as the stomach or liver produces juices, this organ of Bolsheviks produces slander and due to this feature importance of this organ for Bolsheviks is huge. Name of the organ is the “organ of malice” and the more developed it is, the more appreciated the Bolshevik is “.

With these words, Taguna wanted to depict the hazard, which Georgia saw in future when Bolshevism penetrated into the country. He indicated that Bolshevism is an international and national hazard.

He also dedicated a small feuilleton to the leaders of social-democrats Noe Zhordania, in which he skillfully portrayed Noe Zhordania. The leader of social-democrats for him is an anti-hero, who does not

recognize successful Georgians. Noe Zhordania’s dreams and objectives are related only to the victory of socialism. The author stresses Noe Zhordania’s scheme focused on the disintegration of Georgia: “When the day of birth of Noe Zhordania’ was nearing, the Emperor of Russia Alexander the II ordered, that in Georgia boys should not be born for the next 2 years. Noe Zhordania found out about the Tsars plan and was born illegally one month ahead of time. Noe Zhordania was envious that Georgians had such harmonious life and divided Georgia into several classes and kindled the class fight between them. Then he threw major part of Georgian peasants into poverty... he called them proletariat and set them against the other classes remorselessly. But he decided even that would not suffice and he demolished historical remnants, temples, and churches and proclaimed that Georgia has no history. After doing away with the history he established an absolutely strange sect and introduced one barbaric rule – ritual assassination of outstanding Georgian public figures. Noe Zhordania was insisting that the blood of these outstanding patriots was bringing us closer to socialism and he would never write his essays unless he had one glass of real Georgian blood”.

Taguna was coming up with extremely grave accusations against the leader of Georgian social- democrats. It is true, social-democrats could not come up with comprehensive program and trust towards them was gradually reducing due to serious drawbacks in governance. Ideas and political plans of social- democrats in

regard to management and governance of the state are clearly reflected on the pages of newspaper “Ertoba” and it should be noted, that they fail to propose constructive or rational approaches. That is why it is not surprising, that attitude of opponents towards social-democrats and the fierce critique is understandable. In the letters of Alioni contributors, the idea of freedom was transforming in accordance with the time and processes. This was indicative of flexibility of the newspaper.

After 100 years, Rustavi 2 Broadcasting Company’s struggle against government violence and pressure

Right after 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia when the new political team came to power they started the systematic and consistent campaign against Free Media, in particular against Rustavi 2 Broadcasting Company. The ultimate goal of this

campaign was to change the company’s editorial policy and its influence as a leading media outlet in the country through intimidation of the company’s employees and management and curtailing its financial independence. There were attempts to demoralize the journalists and the staff.

Rustavi 2’s General Director was arrested on absurd charges and kept in detention for several days. Offices of company’s top executives were under video and audio surveillance. The political tools government authorities use against independent media: 1. Financial restrictions; 2. Legal persecution; 3. Ownership rights; 4. Direct attacks on media’s high managers and journalists.

Killing or marginalizing independent media and TV Company Rustavi 2, especially in the period preceding to the parliamentary elections in 2016-2017s, will irreparably harm vital democratic institutions.

On 3 March 2017, the European Court of Human Rights decided to temporarily suspend the enforcement of the Supreme Court’s March 2 decision, which granted the ownership rights of Rustavi 2 TV, Georgia’s most-watched television channel, to its former co-owner.

“In the interests of the parties and the proper conduct of the proceedings before it, [the Court decided] to indicate to the Government of Georgia, under Rule 39, that the enforcement of the Supreme Court’s decision of 2 March 2017 should be suspended and that the authorities should abstain from interfering with the applicant company’s editorial policy in any manner,” the ECHR letter said.

It also stated that the Court decided to give priority to the Rustavi 2 application under rule 41, which determines the order in which cases will be dealt by the ECHR. It, however, did not specify when exactly would the Court convene for considering the Rustavi 2 application.

The seven-member Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights decided on March 7 to prolong “until further notice” the suspension of the enforcement of the Supreme Court’s March 2 decision.

“Please be informed that on March 7, 2017, a Chamber constituted from the Section to which the case had been allocated decided unanimously to confirm, until further notice, the interim measure indicated by the judge on March 3, 2017,” the ECHR letter said.

Statements by the Spokesperson of EU

“The Supreme Court’s verdict might have an impact on the country’s media landscape, affecting the diversity of views available to citizens through broadcasting channels. We are confident that the authorities will respect the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. Looking forward, we reiterate that a continued commitment to political pluralism and freedom of the media is fundamental for the preservation and consolidation of democracy. We trust that the Georgian Government will treat these principles as an absolute priority and will actively uphold them, corresponding to essential commitments in the EU-Georgia Association Agreement.”

The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi had said the court ruling “could effectively limit the access of opposition voices to Georgian broadcast media.”

“We urge the Georgian government to take steps to ensure that the media environment remains free, open, and pluralistic,” the embassy’s March 2 statement said.

“Disappointing move & huge blow to media pluralism in Georgia,” Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) media freedom representative Dunja Mijatovic said on Twitter.

Mijatovic urged the Georgian authorities to “ensure media independence and pluralism” following the ruling, according to a statement. “Rustavi-2 “must continue to enjoy full independence and fulfill its professional activity in the public interest,”

Mijatovic said. "Possible attempts to influence the editorial policy of Rustavi-2...would seriously undermine the pluralistic media environment."

One century ago Georgian Media has freedom of expression and the best debates on political issues, after 100 years we were still fighting for freedom of media, for freedom of speech. If not the international community, the results would be terrible not only for media but also for the country and region.

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