

George Anchabadze

**HISTORY  
OF GEORGIA**

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***SHORT SKETCH***

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### **George Anchabadze. History of Georgia. Short sketch**

Above-mentioned work is a research-popular sketch. There are key moments of the history of country since ancient times until the present moment.

While working on the sketch the author based on the historical sources of Georgia and the research works of Georgian scientists (including himself).

The work is focused on a wide circle of the readers.

### **გიორგი ანჩაბაძე. საქართველოს ისტორია. მოკლე ნარკვევი**

წინამდებარე ნაშრომი წარმოადგენს საქართველოს ისტორიის სამეცნიერ-პოპულარულ ნარკვევს. მასში მოკლედაა გადმოცემული ქვეყნის ისტორიის ძირითადი მომენტები უძველესი ხანიდან ჩვენს დრომდე.

ნარკვევზე მუშაობისას ავტორი ეყრდნობოდა საქართველოს ისტორიის წყაროებსა და ქართველ მეცნიერთა (მათ შორის საკუთარ) გამოკვლევებს.

ნაშრომი განკუთვნილია მკითხველთა ფართო წრისათვის.

## Early Ancient Georgia (till the end of the IV cen. B.C.)

Existence of ancient human being on Georgian territory is confirmed from the early stages of anthropogenesis. Nearby *Dmanisi* valley (80 km south-west of Tbilisi) the remnants of homo erectus are found, age of them is about 1,8 million years old. At present it is the oldest trace in Euro-Asia. Later on the Stone Age a man took the whole territory of Georgia. Former settlements of Ashel period (400–100 thousand years ago) are discovered as on the coast of the Black Sea as in the regions within highland Georgia.

Approximately 6–7 thousands years ago people on the territory of Georgia began to use as the instruments not only the stone but the metals as well. And in the IV–III mill. B.C. the ancestors of Georgians learned to get and use the bronze. In the middle of the Bronze Age (the first half of the II mill. B.C.) there existed the strong unions of tribes on the territory of East Georgia. In the big excavations on the *Trialeti* Plateau, where the leaders of those unions used to be buried, are found as the bronze instruments and the earthenware pottery, but also the amazing examples of the Goldsmith Art.

Discoveries of recent years lead us to suppose that on the territory of modern Georgia in the Bronze Age the sort of city settlements had already existed. In particular, in *Kakheti* region, East Georgia, near *Sagarejo*, after air archaeological explorations they found the ruins of city surrounded by steady stonewall, that are researched by Georgian and German scientists. It seems that this city dated by XII-XI centuries B.C. was the fortified center of local tribes.

According to ethnic classification of Caucasian population the Georgians belong to Paleo-Caucasian linguistic family, the representatives of which are descendents of ancient Caucasian population (the name of "Paleo-Caucasian" comes from it). This family is divided into three branches (groups): 1) Western, or *Abkhazian-Adighei*; 2) Eastern, or *Chechen-Daghestanian*; and 3) Southern, or *Kartvelian*<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, the Western branch combines modern Abkhazians, Abazians, adighei, Circassians and Kabardians; the Eastern branch – Chechens, Ingushians and Daghestan highland people (Avarians, Lezgians, Dargians, Laks and others); the Georgian branch is represented by Georgian people comprising of three main sub-ethnic groups – *Karts*, *Zanes* or *Megrelian-Chans*, and *Svans*. Previous division of Kartvelian language into Georgian, Zanian and Svan branches started in III–II B.C.

In that epoch the Georgian tribes dwelled as on the big territory of modern Georgia, also in the regions of North-East Anatolia. At the end of the II mill. B.C. and at the beginning of the I mill. B.C. some of those tribes reached the threshold of the creation of the Country. In the XII cen. B.C. at the sources of rivers Chorokhi and Euphrates the early-class union *Diauekhi*, which according to some scientists was a union of Georgian tribes was created. The population of Diaukhi had to hold hard struggles against the strong kingdoms of the Front Asia - Assyria and Urartu. In the IX–VIII cen. B.C. Urartu destructed and conquered Diauekhi. After that the kings of Urartu began the wars against the Kartvelian Union on the Bank of the Black Sea - *Kolkha*. *Kolkha* must have been that *Kolkhida* Kingdom, information about it is saved in the old Greek Legend about Argonauts. In the 30–20 years of the VIII cen. B.C. this early Kolkhidian Kingdom was destructed by the Kimirians from North.

In the VII–VI cen. B.C. the Kolkhidian State was revived again as it seems. Its center of must have been on the river *Rioni* (old *Phasis*). The basis of this period's Kolkhida was the developed agriculture, cattle-breeding and the iron metalurgy. On the basis of the internal developing, on the Rioni Valley was created the city-like settlements. In the VI–III cen. B.C. here began the process of minting of silver coins for the internal market.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the scientists do not share theory of genetic relations between the separate branches of Paleocaucasian families. (Especially it concerns relationship of Kartvelian group towards two other branches). They suppose that Paleocaucasian unity is a geographical notion, not genealogical.

From the VI cen. B.C. trade and other relations of Kolkhida with the Greek World were widening. Soon on the Black Sea coast appeared city-colonies of Greeks – *Phasises* (near Poti), *Gienoses* (Ochamchire), *Dioskuria* (Sukhum) and others.

In the IV-III cen. B.C. the Union of Kolkhida was gradually weakening and at last it was destroyed. Its Eastern Regions entered the new-created, Eastern-Georgian Kingdom, *Iberia*.

## **Georgian Kingdoms in the Late Antique Period (the IV cen. B.C. – V cen.)**

There were several early-state creations of Georgian tribes on the modern Eastern territory of Georgia in the IV cen. B.C. and they had permanent struggles for the leadership. In this struggle won the union, the center of which was town *Mtskheta*, existing at the mouth of the Rivers Kura (*Mtkvari* in Georgian) and *Aragvi*. Mtskheta existed on a very useful place – in the junction of the roads from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea, and from the East Europe to Front Asia that helped the fast development of the town.

At the end of the IV cen. B.C. the representative of Mtskheta aristocracy – *Parnavaz*, unified the territory from the Caucasus Range till the source of the River Euphrates, and got the title of King. Thus was created the unified Eastern Georgian Kingdom – *Iberia* (*Kartli* in Georgian). Mtskheta became the capital of this Kingdom, and the residence of the Kings of Iberia was the citadel on the high mountain opposite to Mtskheta – *Armaztsikhe*.

Iberia, or Kartli, was a rich, densely inhabited country. According to the natural conditions, it consisted of two zones – highland and lowland. The population of the highland mainly was occupied with cattle-breeding, and the population of the lowland – with agriculture. The highlanders were distinguished by being warriors and played a big role in the military organization of Iberia.

In the cities of Iberia there lived merchants and handicraftsmen, but the important part of them was of the foreign origin – mainly Jews and Syrians.

In the religious life of Iberia there were many things remained from the Tribal System Age. They worshiped the God of Fertility and the Devines of Thunder and Heavenly Bodies. There existed the remainders of Totemism. From the Parnavaz period at the head of Pantheon stood the God of Moon – *Armazi*, the idol of which stood near Mtskheta, on the top of one of the mountains. Armazi expressed a cruel warrior, with armour and a sword in his hand.

In a Foreign Policy, Parnavaz and his closest inheritors took their bearings to the union with Selevkides<sup>2</sup>, but in the II cen. B.C. international condition aggravated for Iberia. In the South, the country lost several big districts, which were cut off by the new-created Armenian Kingdoms, and in the West, the neighbour of Iberia became the Ponto Kingdom, the King of which, Mithridate VI, annexed Kolkhida to his domain. During the Wars of Mithridate, Iberia was his ally against Rome, that became a reason for invasion of a famous Roman General – Pompey, on its territory in 65 y. B.C. Pompey defeated the army of Artag, the King of Iberia in a big struggle, but faced a wide-spread public resistance, which forced him to hasten a conclusion of peace with Artag. According to the Pax, Iberia became an ally of unequal rights to Rome. After that Romans entered Kolkhida and conquered this country too.

In the I–II cen. the Iberian Kingdom strengthened again, that was a result of economical rise of the country. Agriculture, handicraft, trading developed. The territory of Iberia was crossed by a big trade way from India to Greece.

The strengthening of Iberia at first was profitable for Romans, because in their Eastern Policy they often used the Iberian Allies. Besides, Iberia controlled the most important Passes of Central Caucasus, by which it protected the Asian domains of Rome from the invasion of the warrior tribes from the Northern Caucasus. But the strengthened Iberia gradually began to run its independent

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<sup>2</sup> Selevkids – royal dynasty that ruled one of the states in Front Asia based on the ruins of the empire of Alexander Macedonian in 312-64 B. C.

foreign policy. The King *Parsman I* (the I cen.) used the opposition between Rome and Partia and possessed Armenia, the King of which became at first his brother and then his son. In the I–II cen. the territory of Iberia widened. It got back its lost Southern provinces.

In the II cen. the condition in Kolkhida was characterized with the new political realities. In its sea-coast zone there were created Western Georgian and Abkhazian tribal Principalities – *Lazika*, *Apsilia*, *Abazgia*, *Sanigia*, the governors of which recognized the supremacy of Roman Emperors.

In the III cen. the foreign-political situation of Iberia aggravated again. The main object of the expency of the dominion in Iran, new Persian dynasty – Sasanides, became Transcaucasus that forced Iberia to stand firmly with the Rome orientation again and to oppose Iran. The one of the expression of that was a declaration of Christianity as a state religion of Iberia, which happened approximately in 337. As it appears, in the IV cen. Christianity was established in Kolkhida as well, where at that time was a tendency of unity. For instance, the principality of one of the Western Georgian (Zanian) tribes, Lazis – Lazika (*Egrisi* in Georgian), spreaded its influence on other local political units and tribes. The strengthened Kings of Lazis quited from submission of Rome too.

In Iberia, development of Christianity gave a strong jerk to the development of Georgian writing. The oldest Georgian writings, kept until now, which are written by an original script, are dated the V cen.

In the IV–V cen. there was a process of establishing feudal relations in Georgia. This period is a difficult foreign-political condition for Iberia. The union with Romans couldn't protect the country from the aggression of Sasanides, which especially became stronger from the V cen. when Persians conquered the neighbouring countries of Iberia – Armenia and Albania and came to the borders of East Georgia. The Wars between Georgians and Persians began. Especially must be noted the second half of the V cen. when the King of Iberia was Vakhtang Gorgasal (449–502). The King Vakhtang was a good warrior, clever and vigorous governor. He tried to unify the people of Transcaucasus against Sasanides. In this way, he had a success. In his period Iberia strengthened again and annexed several neighbouring territories. Vakhtang Gorgasal also held a big constructing activity too. Founding Tbilisi as a city is related to his name, which was only a fortress before<sup>3</sup>. But in the beginning of the VI cen. Vakhtang Gorgasal was killed in the struggle against Persians.

## **Georgia in the Early Feudal Period (VI – X cen.). Creation of Georgian People**

In the VI cen. there already reigned Feudalism on the territory of Georgia though in the Highland regions the communal regime remained for a long time. The old tribal and slave-owning aristocracy gradually formulated to the feudal class – noblemen (*aznaurs* in Georgian). The layer of the free peasants was decomposing, the unimportant part of which passed in the category of aznaurs, and the majority gradually became the independent serfs.

The large feudalists of Kartli opposed the government and on the ground of strengthening their political requirements and civil rights began to make the union with the Shah of Iran. Shah of Iran used this situation well and in 523 after the rebellion of Georgians, abolished the King's Government in Kartli. The supreme government of the country passed in the hands of the Vice-Gerent of Shah – *Marzpan*, the residence of which became Tbilisi.

After beginning the reign in Eastern Georgia, Iran drew its look to the Western Part of the country *Lazika*, as Iberian rebels always found a shelter help there. Besides, by the conquering Lazika, Iran would get a good bridge-head against Eastern Rome Empire, or Bizantium. By their side, Bizantinnes strengthened the press on Lazika too, which was considered as the vassal Kingdom of the Empire. They brought their armies in these countries. Bizantium statesmen and military-men were torturing the population of Lazika, they ignored the local government too. This forced the King of Lazika, Gubaz II to rebel and ask for help to Shah of Iran in 541. Shah of Iran

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<sup>3</sup> Building of fortress-wall of Tbilisi was finished by the heir of Vakhtang, Dachi (beginning of VI c.), who moved a throne city from Mtskheta to Tbilisi, according to the will of his father.

was holding the war with the Empire of Bizantium. Iranians entered Lazika and with the help of Gubaz II, cleaned the country from Bizantines. But after the real aims of Shah towards Lazika were known, (to kill Gubaz, to exile Lazs in Iran and to settle Iranian colonies on their territories), Gubaz II took the side of Bizantines again and in 562, finally banished Iranians from the territory of Western Georgia. This part still remained under the political influence of Bizantium.

At this time, the reign of Iranians in Eastern Georgia became unbearable for noblemen, who by the wide support of the population banished Iranians from Georgia in 70s of the VI cen. and the reigns of the government took in their hands. But at the end of the VI cen. and in the first half of the VII cen. East Georgia still was suffering from the frequent invasions of the armies of Iran and Bizantium, which tried to make this rich and situated on the suitable place, by the strategic view, country obey.

Although the frequent invasions and wars in the V–VI cen. were the important period for the Georgian culture. To this period belongs the oldest literatural works: "Torturing of Shushanik" of Iakob Tsuraveli (V cen.) and "Torturing of Evstati Mtskheteli" of the unknown writer (VI cen.). Were built the ecclesiastical architectural works *Bolnisi* (V cen.), *Djvari* (VI cen.) etc. To the development of civil architecture point the ruins of the fortresses of that period – *Ujarma*, *Cheremi*, *Tsikhegoji*, etc.

In the middle period of the VII cen. at the borders of Georgia came Arabs. After the destroying attack they managed to make the main provinces of the country obey and put the tributes on them. The governor of Arabs, Emir accommodated in Tbilisi and governed the conquered part of Georgia from there. But Georgian people didn't stand the reign of foreigners. From the end of the VIII cen. new rebellions began, which gradually ruined the basis of the government of Arabs in Georgia. The Punisher Expeditions, sent from the centre of Caliphate, although their small successes, couldn't manage to abolish the resistance of Georgians. Besides, this was supported by the process of weakening of Caliphate in the IX–X cen.

At the end of the VIII cen. and in the beginning of the IX cen. in the conditions of struggles with the foreign conquerors, on the territory of Georgia were established new feudal Kingdoms: *Kakheti* Principality, *Hereti* Kingdom, *Abkhazia* Kingdom<sup>4</sup>, *Tao-Klarjeti* Kingdom. These Kingdoms released a big part of Georgia from the slavery. So at the X cen. Arabs only had Tbilisi and a small region near it.

Those mentioned political units waged struggles for leadership, in which Abkhazian kingdom became a leader, then – *Tao-Klarjeti* kingdom. That battle in fact fostered the political unification process of Georgia that clearly was encouraged by certain ethno-political or social-economic factors.

Thus, at the second half of the X cen. the necessary political social-economical and ethnical fore conditions of unifying Georgia as a whole Kingdom appeared. Because of all that, the King Bagrat III Bagrationi (975–1014), who was the representative of the dynasty of the Kingdom of *Tao-Klarjeti*, from the side of his father, and the representative of the governing dynasty of *Abkhazia*, from the side of his mother, managed to unify the large part of the country. The Capital of politically unified Georgia became *Kutaisi*.

At the same time with the struggle for political union of Georgia, there was a natural process of creation feudal Georgian nations, which practically ended by the X cen. The main kernel of Georgian people was *Karts*, which occupied the largest and the most important part of the country, *Megrelians* and *Svans*. Besides, some other tribes of Paleocaucasian origin entered Georgian nation. The word, *Kartveli*, which meant only the inhabitants of *Kartli* (*Iberia*) in early times, became the common auto ethnonime for all Georgians since the X–XI cen. Approximately in the same period

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<sup>4</sup> Leading role in forming the Kingdom of *Abkhazs* was played by *Abkhazia* (*Abazgia*) Principality. The Prince of *Abkhazia* *Leon II* unified territories of *Abkhazia* and *Egrisi* and received title of "the king of *Abkhazs*" (end of VIIIc.). He chose a Georgian town *Kutaisi* as a capital. The heirs of *Leon* widened the borders of Kingdom even more. Bigger part of that Kingdom was consisted of *Kartvelian* elements ( *Karts*, *Zans*, *Svans*), and Georgian language was the main language for writing and culture. Thus, the Kingdom of *Abkhazs* and ethnic *Abkhazs*, as well were involved into the system of political formations of Georgia. Common Georgian politics played a positive role for unification of Georgia.

there appeared also the term "Sakartvelo" which meant the entire country. ("Sakartvelo" is a Georgian word for Georgia). The language for writing and divine service for Georgians was Georgian (in Georgian "Kartuli Ena"), though in some provinces the local languages were spread.

## **Georgia in the Developed Feudal Period (XI–the first quarter of the XIII cen.)**

At the time of the death of Bagrat III, outside the unified Georgian Kingdom still remained Tbilisi, which was the centre of a little Mohammedian Princedom, and the Southern part of Georgia, which was conquered by the Bizantium Empire after 1001. So, the main problem of the inheritors of Bagrat III was to join these territories.

Giorgi I (1014–1027) fought with Bizantines to get back Georgian lands in vain. At the beginning of reign of his son, Bagrat IV (1027–1072) Bizantines invaded Georgia themselves but they were defeated. Bagrat IV fought for liberation of Tbilisi and fortresses, which were still in the hands of Bizantines. But he couldn't end his deed because of particularism of Feudalists and invasions of a new enemy – Selchukid-Turks, who invaded Georgia for the first time in 1064.

The invasions of Selchukid-Turks became wider in 1080. Georgia was cruelly ruined by them, and the important part of the population was exterminated and captured. It forced the King Giorgi II (1072–1089) to visit the Great Sultan of Selchukid-Turks, Melik-Shah, and promise to pay the annual tribute. But it didn't stop the raids of the Turkish separate groups in Georgia. Besides there were the garrisons of Selchukid-Turks in the most important fortresses of Eastern Georgia (Tbilisi among them).

The situation was changed at 90s, in the XI cen. when after the death of Melik-Shah, in the Kingdom of Selchukid-Turks set anarchy, and from the West part it was advanced by European Crusaders. The new King of Georgia David IV (1089–1125) used this situation well and in 1097 stopped paying the tribute to Selchukid-Turks and began struggles for the final banishment of the enemy from Georgia. David was a vigorous person, was a clever general and the great statesman. The reforms held by him made Georgia become the strong Kingdom. With the leadership of David, Georgians defeated Selchukid-Turkish armies several times, especially in Didgori on August 12, 1121 and in 1122 advanced Tbilisi which was declared as the Capital of Georgia.

After liberation of Georgian lands in 1123–1124, David IV banished Selchukid-Turks from the neighbouring Armenian and Azerbaijanian provinces and annexed these territories to Georgia. Thus, at the end of the reign of the King David, estate of Georgia was from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea.

David IV also drew his attention to construction of cities, roads and bridges, which supported the economical revival of Georgia. The King, who was very educated for this period, and fond of books, cared for the development of cultural-educational centres too. For example, at the Gelati Cloister, with his indication, there was created Academy, where the subjects: philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, rhetoric, music and others were taught. The other Academy was established in Ikalto (East Georgia). For such many-sided constructive activity, Georgian people called David IV "David the Builder".

From the period of David the Builder, begins Feudal, so-called "The Golden Age" of Georgia, and the most important period of political, cultural and economical blossom. In the periods of Giorgi III (1156-1184) and the Queen Tamar (1184-1213) Georgia was one of the strongest Kingdoms in Near East. The wars mostly ended with the victory of Georgian Armies. With the scale and political results, the struggles of *Shamkor* (1195) and *Basiani* (1202) are especially important, where Georgians defeated forces of Governors of North-West Iran and Small Asia. In the period of the King Tamar the Kingdom of Georgia owned the big part of Transcaucasus and its political influence was spread on the neighbouring territories - from the North Caucasus Highland till the Southern Coast of the Black Sea, where in 1204, with the efforts of the King Tamar was established the Greek-Georgian Trabson Empire.



The one of the important factors, which conditioned the success of Georgian armament, was the military activity, perfected in numerous wars. The kernels of the Georgian armed forces were the permanent army of the King and the knight-aznaur groups, based on the feudal system, and the kernel of helping force was contingents of allies and hired groups, mainly from the North Caucasus. In the first quarter of the XII–XIII cen. Georgians could lead to the struggle 60–90 warriors at the same time. It was mainly cavalry, which was well armed and recruited.

The military-political strength of Georgia relied on developed many-sided economic. To the economical strength of the country indicates creation of complicated system of irrigating channels. For example, during the reign of the King Tamar, only one such channel was 119 km long and watered the area of 53 000 hectares. Besides the channel-building, there also developed gardening, viticulture and husbandry. Georgia was famous with flax, rice, cotton and seliculture. The second important part of agriculture was cattle-breeding.

The main centres of trade and handicraft were cities. At the beginning of the XIII c. there lived approximately 100 000 people in Tbilisi. The important cities also were Kutaisi, Rustavi, Gori, Dmanisi and etc.

Georgia was trading with the countries of Near East, Bizantium and Russia.

In the XI–XIII cen. Georgian Feudal culture reached the top of blossom. There developed philosophical thinking, historygraphy, philology, ecclesiastical and national literature, art. To the end of the XII cen. belongs the works of Georgian great poet *Shota Rustaveli*, whose poem, "Knight in the Panther's Skin" is one of the masterpieces of the World Literature.

In the XII cen. there also was created an official collection of Georgian historical essays "Kartlis Tskhovreba". The chronicles of the authors of the VIII–XII cen. were unified in the collection so that it became the permanent description of history of Georgia from ancient times till the time of creation of the book. Then, until the XVIII cen. the "Kartlis Tskhovreba" was periodically completed with new essays. Thus was established the main written source of history of Georgia of Feudal Age, which included the most important data also about the other countries of Caucasus.

Important Georgian Architectural Monuments, which are created in this period are Bagrati, Svetitskhoveli and Alaverdi Cathedrals (XI cen.), Gelati Cloister, the King's Palace in Geguti, Cloister in the Rock, Vardzia (XII cen.), Phitareti and Betania Churches (the beg. of the XIII cen.) and others. In the Churches and Cloisters there still are the brilliant examples of stone carving and mural painting. On the high level of development was also decoration of manuscripts, gold-work, production of partition enamel and etc.

After the death of the King Tamar on the Throne set her son, Lasha-Giorgi IV (1213-1222). The beginning of his reign was notified with the military successes. Inspired by his victories, Giorgi IV was going to make the Crusade in Palestine, but at the borders of Georgia in 1220 suddenly appeared Mongolians of Genghis Khan. In the struggle against them, the King was wounded and soon died. On the Throne of Georgia set his sister Rusudan (1222-1245).

## **Political Decomposition of Feudal Georgia (XIII-XV cen.)**

During the period of reign of Rusudan there appeared the internal crisis in the feudal society, which shook the strength of the country and became the reason of defeat of Georgians by the enemies. In 1225-1231 Shah of Khwarezm, Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu, several times successfully invaded Georgia. He also took Tbilisi and exterminated the large part of its Christian population. True, soon after that he was defeated in the struggle with Mongolians and died, but the weakened from his invasions Georgia stayed against the stronger enemy – Mongolians. In 1243 Rusudan had to officially accept the supremacy of Mongolian Khan. Mongolians didn't abolish Georgian Kingdom, which was the result of resistance of Georgians. Conquerors stopped at the step that the king recognized the supreme government of Genghisides, that he would pay annual tribute and in the case of necessity help them with the military forces.

After the death of Rusudan there appeared two pretenders for the state throne: the son of Lasha-Giorgi, David-Ulu, and the son of Rusudan, David-Narin. In 1247 Mongolians affirmed the both of them as the kings, which obviously created the fore-condition for the country decomposition.

The domination of Mongolians heavily laid on Georgia. The annual tribute destroyed the economical basis of the country. Besides, Georgians regularly had to participate in the far struggles of Mongolians, which was connected to the material outlays and human victimization.

To get rid of this situation, in 1259 the king, David-Narin rebelled against Mongolians and moved to West Georgia, which was declared as the independent kingdom. It was the beginning of political decomposition of the country, because East Georgia, with the subordinated northern Armenia stayed in the hands of David-Ulu and his inheritors, as the Autonomous kingdom, entering the Mongolian Empire.

The kings of East Georgia were trying to avoid this subordination. The rebellions, arranged by them in 1260–1261, 1297–1311 are famous, which were followed by the wide military activities. The real liberation of Georgia from the Mongolian domination happened in the period of the king Giorgi V the Splendid (1314–1346). Giorgi V annexed to Georgia also West Georgian kingdom and thus restored the political integrity of the country.

Liberated Georgia stood on the way to revival, but in 80s of the XIV cen. there appeared the new enemy – Tamerlane. This terrible Middle-Asian conqueror invaded Georgia in 1386–1403 eight times and ruined it, exterminated or captured the important part of the population. This was one of the largest destruction that had happened in the history of Georgia. In spite of that, Tamerlane still couldn't manage to make the whole Georgia obey. His troops were damaged heavily in struggles with the Georgians.

The invasions of Tamerlane caused the horrible damage for the Feudal Georgia. Catastrophically fell economic, the population was abbreviated, the country stood on the way to the cultural flinch. Georgians were involved in the permanent wars, which were hold by the kingdoms arisen on the ruins of the Empire of Tamerlane. The invasions of nomadic tribes were endless.

In the second half of the XV cen. the foreign political condition of Georgia was aggravated. Defeat of Constantinople by Ottoman-Turks in 1453 destroyed the contact with the Christian Europe for the country. Georgia was alone surrounded by the Muslim kingdoms and became the object of their permanent aggression.

The endless wars, economical and cultural flinch became the reason of the delay of the internal development of Georgia. The long period of stagnation began, the one of the results of which was the political decomposition of the country. At the end of the XV cen. Georgia was divided into Kartli, Kakheti and *Imereti* kingdoms, and *Samtskhe* Princedom<sup>5</sup>. But neither these small kingdoms were the centralized units and from their side consisted of several subordinated dominations, the strongest of whom, *Megrelia*, *Abkhazia* and *Guria* Princedoms soon separated from Imereti kingdom and reached the independence from it.

In the princedoms there also were creating semi-independent seniors *satavados*, which mean dominion of the prince (the title "tavadi" was separated from the dominating class in the XV cen.). Tavads, big, landowners, were the vassals (subordinated) of the kings and princes, but had administrative, judicial and tax immunities in their dominions. They had own military forces. The word "nobleman" meant only a small feudal afterwards. Aznaurs were the vassals of the kings, princes, tavads and the church. The obligation of the feudal-vassals was military service at first. At the time of the political disintegration of Georgia the serfdom was already firmly established in the country. The big part of peasants and city merchants and handicraftsmen were just the serves of the kings, feudalists and the church. The wide layer of the private free peasants is remained only in the highlands of Georgia and in Abkhazia.

At the time of political decomposition of Georgia, there already were long ago established serf relations. The large part of peasants and city merchant-handicraftsmen was the slave layer of the

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<sup>5</sup> Since 1334 the Princes of Samtskhe owed the title of "Atabagi", which meant a tutor of a prince – one of the highest official positions in Feudal Georgia. The spread name of Samtskhe- Saatabago comes from that.

Kings, feudalists and churches. The wide layer of independent peasants was only in highland regions and in Abkhazia.

## **Georgia in the Feudal Relations Stagnation Period (XVI–XVII cen.)**

At the end of the XV cen. and in the beginning of the XVI cen. the neighbours of Georgia became two strong kingdoms – Ottoman-Turks Empire and Iran of Sephevids. They began to run the strictly expressed aggressive policy towards Georgia from the very beginning. The struggle of Georgians for independence and original culture, which lasted during 300 years, began. The background of this struggle was frequent internal wars, which made the condition of politically separated Georgia worse. For example only Kartli kingdom held 14 wars against Iran, 11 wars against Turks and 13 wars against other Georgian kingdoms in the XVI cen.

The condition especially was aggravated after Iran and Turkey made agreement on sharing Iraq, Kurdistan and Transcaucasus in 1555. According to this agreement the East part of Georgia was declared as the dominion of Iran and the West part – the dominion of Turkey. But Georgians didn't acknowledge this decision and still were fighting for independence. The kings of Kartli, Luarsab I (1527–1556) and Simon I (1556–1599) should especially notified as the organizers of the national forced resistance in the XVI cen.

At the beginning of the XVII cen. Ottoman-Turks managed to conquer Samtskhe Princedom. The part of Samtskhe Princedom feudals accepted Islam and served Sultan. On the conquered Georgian lands there was created the Ottoman-Turkish administrative unit *Childiry Viliety*, the governing layer of which, including governor Pashas, mainly was the representative of Georgian Feudalists, who accepted Islam.

The rest of the parts of Georgia managed to retain the State system, but had to recognize the supremacy of conquerors: the kingdoms of East Georgia – Kartli and Kakheti became the vassal (subordinated) of Shah of Sephevids, the states of West Georgia became the vassals of Ottoman Sultan. But even this model of relation didn't set peace, because conquerors longed full incorporation of Georgia, and Georgians were trying to use every chance of revival of independence.

The situation especially was aggravated in East Georgia in the first half of the XVII cen. when Shah Abbas I decided to exile Georgians to Iran or exterminate them, and to settle Iranians on their lands. The armies of Shah took 100 000 people as captives only from Kakheti, almost the same number of people was exterminated. After invasions of Shah Abbas there wasn't left even half of the population in Kakheti. But Georgian people failed the plans of Shah with their heroic struggles. In 1625, with the leadership of the King of Kakheti, Teimuraz I and Kartlian general, Giorgi Saakadze, the active Iranian Army in Georgia was destroyed in the rebellion, Shah Abbas was forced to recognize the fact of existing of Georgian kingdoms.

The situation in East Georgia was comparatively stable from 30s of the XVII cen. when the two sides reached the compromise: the kings of Kartli and Kakheti recognized the supremacy of Iranian Shah, and the latter didn't intervene in their internal affairs.

Between the political units in West Georgia in the XVII cen. there were the permanent struggles, which were used by Turks to strengthen their influence. They occupied several coastal points and supported the slave-trade, the result of which was the exile of thousands of Georgian people.

The permanent invasions of foreigners and internal wars caused the new damage for the country, weakened in the previous centuries. Economic was falling, many branches of agriculture and handicraft were destroyed, the number of population abbreviated. These circumstances delayed the further progress of feudal society development and in some places (especially in the highland) caused the renewal of Early feudal and patriarchal institutions.

The economical revival of the country is notified only from the 40s of the XVII cen. and only in East Georgia (Kartli), the condition of which as it was mentioned above, was comparatively stable in this period. The situation caused the positive results for the civil life. The population of Tbilisi was not more than 10 000 people at the end of the XVI cen. and in the second half of the XVII cen. it was risen to 20 000. In this period Georgia had the closest economical relations with the cities of Iran.

From the XV cen. to the XVII cen. the Georgian culture was decreased. The Georgian architecture of this period can not be compared with the brilliant examples of the X–XIII cen. In Georgia of late medieval period such high educating-scientific centres as Gelati and Ikalto didn't exist. The education mainly was given in the families and cloisters. From the XVII cen. in the education sphere, the role of Western catholic-missioners was rising, which was establishing schools in Georgia, where there were taught as catholic preach, so Italian and Latin languages, some practical science etc.

In the XVII cen. the Georgian literature began to revive. The king Teimuraz I, who was warrior and poet, put the national-historical motive in Georgian poetry. He dedicated the poem to the death of his mother, queen Ketevan, who didn't refuse Christianity in the captivity of Shah and so was killed. After Teimuraz, historical theme occupied important place in Georgian poetry.

## **Georgia in the Beginning of Feudal Decomposition (XVIII cen.)**

The XVIII cen. began again with unified internal and external political condition for Georgia. There was a permanent internal war in Western Georgia. Turks were widening their influence there. Slave-trade was still on wide scale, slaves were sold in the slave market of Ottoman-Turks Empire.

East Georgia, as the vassal country of Iran of Sephevids, had to participate in the wars, held by this country. Struggle with rebelled Afghan tribes against Iranians was especially hard, during which many Georgian warriors and two Georgian kings were killed. Afghans also were hardly damaged by Georgians too. As says one of the authors of that time, Afghanian warriors considered Georgians as the most powerful rivals.

In 1709, when Georgian king, Giorgi XI was fighting in Afghanistan, his nephew, Vakhtang (king Vakhtang VI thereafter) was appointed as his assistant in Kartli. Vakhtang was a famous statesman and culture supporter, poet and scientist. During the period of his government Kartli was on the way to ascent: the central government was strengthened, roads were arranged, bridges and irrigating channels were building, minting improved, arose trade-handicraft, the deserted after wars places were mastered again.

Arrangement of internal situation of Kartli was supported by Law Code, which was worked out by Vakhtang and was created according to Georgian Justice of the XI–XVI cen. and various foreign juridical patterns.

With the leadership of Vakhtang, intensive scientific and literature activity began. In 1709 the first Georgian Printing-House was established in Tbilisi, where ecclesiastical and civil books were printed. In 1712, there was printed "Knight in the Panther's Skin" of Rustaveli at the first time, with the basic science research. "Kartlis Tskhovreba" collection and others were also edited and completed with the new materials.

Those mentioned political units waged stuggles for leadership, in which Abkhazian kingdom became a leader, then – Tao-Klarjeti kingdom. That battle in fact fostered the political unification process of Georgia that clearly was encouraged by certain ethno-political or social-economic factors.

The well-deserved representative of scientific school of Vakhtang VI was his son, Vakhushti (1696–1757), who's fundamental work "Inventory of Georgian Kingdom" comprised the unique facts about history of Georgia and geography. This issue was also added with the valuable cartographical materials.

At the same time with building and cultural activity, Vakhtang had to create new armies of nobility and transfer them in Iran, to complete the armies struggling against Afghans.

In 1716 Shah of Iran confirmed Vakhtang VI as the king of Kartli. At that time Kingdom of Sephevids was already weakened. At its borders stood Turkey and Russia in Transcaucasus. Vakhtang hoped that Russia, which was of one religion, would help Georgia to revive independence. He made a secret agreement with the Emperor of Russia, Peter I that considered the war against Iran together. So, in 1722 the army of Russia passed Caspian Sea coast and directed to South. Vakhtang VI, according to the plan, invaded Shah Dominions with 30 000 warriors to join Russians, but it didn't happen. Peter I suddenly changed his plans and moved back, that put the king of Kartli in difficulty. Angry Shah, who obviously saw the "treachery" of Vakhtang, ordered to dismiss him from the throne and gave the throne of Kartli to the king of Kakheti, Constantine II. In 1723 Constantine took Tbilisi with the hired army of Dagestanians. The struggle caused a large damage to the town. At the same time Turks began invasions from West. Vakhtang VI couldn't stay in Georgia any more and had to escape to Russia. Armies of Ottoman-Turks occupied Tbilisi. Constantine II tried to struggle but he was killed.

In 1723–1735 Turks were dominating in East Georgia, and then, revived Iranian armies exiled Turks and established their government in the country. Georgians were fighting as against Turks so against Iranians, but liberating activity was disturbed by permanent feudal internal wars, which were held at the same time with the foreign struggles. The country was ruined from intensive military activities.

Beside the Ottoman and Iranian occupation and internal problems, invasions of Dagestani groups in East Georgia were strengthening, which caused a large damage to the population. Georgians were fighting against Ottoman-Turks, Iranians and Dagestanians. These struggles were led by the younger brother of Constantine II, Teimuraz II. Shah of Iran was forced to make serious concessions to Georgians. In 1744 Teimuraz restored Kartli and Kakheti kingdoms, which after 1723 were abolished. The king of Kartli became Teimuraz II, and the king of Kakheti became his son, Erekle II.

They governed East Georgia at first as vassals of Iran, but then when Shah of Iran was killed by the conspirators in 1747, and there set anarchy in Iran, Kartli and Kakheti kingdoms got back their political independence.

After the death of Nadir-Shah, the long-term wars between the kingdoms, erected on the ruins of his Empire, began. Georgians with the leadership of Erekle II were mostly the winners in these wars. They not only defended their independence, but made some neighboring Khanates obey. Erekle showed himself as a clever general and a brave warrior. After the death of his father, Teimuraz II (1762), he became the king of the integral Kartli-Kakheti, or a whole East Georgia.

Victory of Georgians caused a big resonance in West Europe. There were articles in the French and German newspapers, the authors of which praised Erekle II and supposed that he would manage to occupy Iran, where the bloody internal wars took place.

The condition in Imereti Kingdom got comparably better. Its king, Solomon I (1752–1784) was vigorously struggling for the strength of the central governance and for liberating the country from the dominance of Turkey. He prohibited also slave-trade. The government of Ottoman-Turks obviously didn't like such policy of Solomon I. Ottoman-Turkish armies invaded Imereti several times, but they failed.

In 1768–1774 Erekle and Solomon supported Russia in the war against Turkey, but in spite of this, that Erekle defeated the military forces of Childiry Viliety, he couldn't succeed because of the betrayal of Russian General of Transcaucasia. In 1774 with the Pact with Turkey, Russia recognized sovereignty of Ottoman-Turks on West Georgia, but there was one condition, if Sultan would refuse the tributes from Imereti.

In the 50–70s of the XVIII cen. there shaped a definite rise in East Georgia. For the release of peasants conditions there were adopted a lot of laws, with which the condition of agriculture got comparably better. The mining revived in East Georgia. New enterprises were open, where the hired employment was widely used. The first manufactures were established. Erekle II tried his best to put Georgia on the European way of development. In the period of his reign, there already appeared the decomposition of feudal relations in Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom. The part of peasants

liberated from the serfdom and became the free producers. The role of rich Tbilisian merchants rose in the society life, single persons from the low level promoted on the high state ranks.

In the culture and education sphere, two seminaries and other educational institutions were open. In 1782 the first Georgian original play was performed in Tbilisi. From Georgian poets of that period, David Guramishvili (1705–1792) and Besik Gabashvili (1750–1791) are to be notified.

From the beginning of the 80s, the situation of East Georgia was aggravated again. One of the reasons for it was the permanent invasions of Daghestanians. They robbed the population, kidnapped the captives and sold them on the slave-markets of Ottoman-Turks and North Caucasus. All regions of East Georgia emptied from the invasions of Daghestanians.

In such condition, Erekle II decided to strengthen the situation with Russia again. In 1783, in the Russian fortress Georgievsk, the representatives of Russia Empire and Kartli-Kakheti signed the Treaty, according to which, East Georgia passed under the Russian protection. Georgians accepted the supremacy of Russian Emperor and refused the independent external policy. On its side, Russia promised to defend Georgia from the enemies, for which two Russian battalions with two cannons had to stand there. Also, Russia promised not to interfere with the internal affairs of Georgia. Royal Throne remained in the hands of Erekle and his descendants.

Georgievsk Treaty didn't bring any particular goodness to Georgia, but the negative result was big. Governing circles of Iran and Ottoman-Turks, who were disturbed by entering of Russia in Transcaucasia opposed Erekle II. Invasions of Daghestanians strengthened. One of the strongest owners of Daghestan, Omar-Khan successfully invaded Georgia with his army of 20 thousand warriors in 1785 Russian battalions couldn't repel Daghestanians and Russia took its forces from Georgia and Erekle II stayed alone. In the meantime, the struggle for integrity of Iran was over. The head of the state became the founder of Kajar dynasty, Agha-Mohamed-Khan. In 1795 he invaded Transcaucasia with the huge army for revival of Iranian governance there. Erekle II, according to the Treaty, asked Russia for help, but he got nothing except promises. In the meantime, Agha-Mohamed-Khan came to Georgia with the army of 30 thousand warriors and after the bloody struggle, occupied Tbilisi on September 12, 1795. Iranians destroyed the city and captured its 10 thousand inhabitants.

After this tragedy, the situation of Kartli-Kakheti was more aggravated. In 1798 Erekle II died and his son, Giorgi XII (1798–1800), who was weak and passive, set on the Throne.

At this time, Russian government decided to annex East Georgia. In 1799 Russian armies entered Georgia again. And after the death of Giorgi XII, in 1801, Russian Emperor, Alexander I declared his manifesto on abolishment of Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom and its annexation with Russia. Manifesto hypocritically said, that this Act was dictated with only the care of the interests of Georgian people. The place in Tbilisi, where the Manifesto was publicly declared, was sieged by Russian army and artillery. And those from the listeners, who protested the abolishment of the Kingdom, were arrested on the place.

Thus, the period of Russian governance in Georgia began.

## **Annexation of Georgia in Russian Empire**

Annexation of East Georgia by Russia and adopting new forms of governing caused the discontent of wide layers of population. The important part of nobility was displeased by annulment of the kingdom and limitation of old feudal rights, and on the back of Georgian peasants besides the heavy taxes lay the fate of national oppression. Colonial regime was of a military-police character. There was an absolute unlawfulness in the country. Russian military-men and statesmen were robbing the people and those who expressed even the lest protest, were cruelly punished. This fact caused the several anti-Russian armed actions in East Georgia in 1804–1812 and 1813. The leaders of these actions were the single representatives of the Georgian royal family, which hoped to revive the monarchy. It took the extreme forces for Russian armies to suppress the rebellions, but the experience forced the Russian government to soften its policy towards Georgia and to abolish the

unlimited license of Russian executioners. Also, the members of Kartl-Kakheti Kingdom were exiled in Russia.

After beginning the domination in East Georgia, Russia started to extend its dominions in Transcaucasia. As the result of two wars with Iran, Russia occupied North Azerbaijan and East Armenia. As for West Georgia, the annexation was implemented by two stages: at first, Russia took under its protection the local political bodies (1803 – Megrelia Princedom; 1804 – Imereti Kingdom; 1810 – Guria and Abkhazia Princedoms; 1833 – Svaneti Princedom), and then gradually abolished them by the complete annexation of their territories (Imereti – 1810; Guria – 1828; Megrelia – 1857; Svaneti – 1858; Abkhazia – 1864).

Abolition of Imereti Kingdom Russia managed only after the direct military aggression. The last king of Imereti Solomon II (1789–1810) was forced to escape to Osman Empire, where he died in 1815.

The policy of Tsarism, to abolish the independence of Georgian Church, caused a large rebellion in Imereti and Guria in 1819–1820, but the rebels were defeated in the struggle with Russians. Their villages were exterminated and burnt. In spite of this, there happened another anti Russian rebellion in Guria in 1841 but it was also cruelly suppressed.

There were permanent armed actions in Abkhazia too (in 1821, 1824, 1840–1842, 1866, 1877). Besides, North-West Abkhazian tribes haven't obeyed Russia at all, they were permanently striving and after their defeat (1864) they escaped and settled in Osman Empire. After the suppression of 1866 and 1877 rebellions, Abkhazian native population was massively exiled in Turkey.

As a result of the Russia-Turkey wars Russia Empire annexed (and thus Georgia got back) the territories, conquered by Turks in the previous centuries: *Samtskhe-Javaketi* with its chief town *Akhaltzikhe* (1829), Adjara and several regions with t. Batumi (1878). This was some kind of positive fact for Georgia, attended by negative facts too. Thousands of Georgian Muslim population inhabiting the annexed territories escaped and settled in the inner regions of Osman Empire. The main reason of their escape was unwillingness to live under Russian administration. The government of the Tsar resettled the Armenians ejected from Turkey and the representatives of other nations.

Thus, in 1801–1878 Georgia was almost completely annexed with Russia Empire. Afterwards, only the extreme South-West part of Georgia remained outside the borders of Russia.

## **Development of Capitalism in Georgia. Periods after national and social liberating actions (the middle of the XIX cen. – 1917)**

From the 30–50s of the XIX cen. there was mainly the stabile situation in Georgia, which was stipulated by strengthening the position of Russia in the Caucasus. Agriculture, trade and industry were developed. The number of population arose, as because of the natural increase, also because of the colonization policy of the king government, which for the reason of strengthening its social support, was widely running the settlement of Russian and foreign colonists in Georgia.

In this period, decomposition of feudal natural farming and increasing the monetary-productive relations were intensively developing. The owners of industrial enterprises of Georgia mainly were Russian and foreigner capitalists. But the resistance of development of capitalism was self-ownership in Georgia. In the 30–40s of the XIX cen. these vicious reminders were even strengthened, as Russian government supported the rights of Georgian landlords for the reason of enticing them on its side. Thus, the rights of Georgian nobility were made equal to the Russian ones. The form of government changed in Transcaucasia too. From 1840 there were adopted the same administrative and court organizations, as were in the inner provinces of Russia. The limited culture al autonomy (Georgian newspapers and magazines, Georgian theater) was permitted. With such policy the government reached the complete devotion of Georgian nobility to Russia from the 40s. Georgian aristocrats were searching for the careers, first of all in military service. They served

as in the regular army of Russia, also in the Regular Georgian Militia, which played the active role in the Caucasian wars of Russia during the whole XIX cen.

In the second half of the 50s, the crisis of the serf regime in Russia was strengthened. This fact spread in Georgia too. The peasants were rebelling against their owners (especially the large rebellion happened in Megrelia in 1857). This forced the government to hold the peasant reforms in Georgia too. In 1864–1871 the serfdom was abolished in Georgia.

The 60–70s of the XIX was the period of changes in the history of Georgia. After the reforms, capitalism was rapidly developed. The factories and enterprises were built, minerals (coal and manganese) were acquired, cities – Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Poti, Batumi etc. were developed, the railway station was constructed. In spite of these things Georgia remained the agrarian country, though development of capitalistic relations was in the high process.

Annexation with Russia brought the knowledge of European culture to Georgia, which played the positive role in the further development of Georgian culture. In the 60–70s there appeared the new progressive-democratic generation on the path of literature and society, the education of which was from the Russian Universities, and had a critical opinion about the colonial regime and feudal reminders in Georgia. The leader of this generation was the writer, social and political body, Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907). The open movement under his leadership was the new peaceful form of the national-liberating action, which changed the local armed rebellions in the first half of the XIX cen.

Devoted person of Giorgi XI and later Vakhtang was a writer, scientist and a diplomat Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani (1658–1725). Didactical work "Wisdom of Lies" is distinguished from his literary heritage. Sul Khan-Saba made an explanatory dictionary of Georgian language that is still of great importance.

After the assassination of the Russian Emperor in 1881, Alexander II, the political reaction occupied the country. The government stood on the way to oppression and Russification of the people, inhabiting the Empire and Georgians among. The publishing of Georgian books, newspapers and magazines was extremely limited. There was abolished Georgian language in schools. The word "Georgia" was even erased from the official documents, and put the "Tbilisi province" and "Kutaisi province" instead. This policy was excused by the wrong theory that the time of small nations was over and they were historically doomed for the assimilation with the larger nations.

In such conditions Ilia Chavchavadze and his adherents bravely strived against the national-colonial oppression. They strived for deepening the consolidation of Georgian nation and its national self-consciousness. The government couldn't clutch these actions. On the contrary, this movement was strengthened and widened afterwards, though it didn't accept the shape of political rebellion.

In the 90s, there began the process of Marxism propaganda in Georgia. Georgia was one of the important centers of the revolutionary struggles during the revolution in Russia in 1905–1907. Peasants and workers were rebelling. There happened barricade struggles in Tbilisi, also there began the armed rebellions in the villages of West Georgia. The punishing armies, sent by the government exterminated several villages.

The big part of Georgian revolutionaries was calling the social slogans in 1905–1907 but they were striving against the national oppression too. Besides, there existed the second branch in the revolutionary-democratic stream, which considered the liberation of Georgia as priority question. Some of them required the entire separation from Russia; most of them were for the autonomous feudal union with democratic Russia after victory of revolution

So, the revolutionary movement in Georgia in the beginning of the XX cen. was the next stage of the national-liberating action.

National motive was of stronger shape in Georgia during the period of new revolutionary revival, which began from 1912 in Russia too. The beginning of the World War I temporarily retarded this process. The continuous wars in Georgia and in Russia caused the farming decomposition. Already in the first year of the war, some industrial spheres of Georgia diminished



the producing for 40–50 per cents. In the next years the condition was harder. The important part of workers (200 thousand people) was in active army. Georgia became the war-coast country after involving Turkey in the war against Russia. The crisis after the war caused the increase of revolutionary characters in Russia again, the end of which was the 1917 February revolution, which ended the existence of monarchy in the country.

## **Temporary revival of Independence and re-conquer of Georgia by Russia (1918–1921)**

After February, 1917 revolution democratic changes took place in Russia. One of the results of those changes in Georgia was revival of independence of the Orthodox Church (March, 1917). But the temporary government of Russia couldn't decide those cardinal issues, which especially bothered the wide layers of population: the Pact issues (country kept participating in the World War), land issues etc. This condition was well used by Bolsheviks (Communists) with the leadership of Lenin and in October, 1917 they overthrew the temporary government. Transcaucasian political parties and organizations didn't acknowledge the legacy of these changes. On November 15, 1917 they created their own government *Transcaucasian Commissariat*, which consisted mainly of local parties. In fact, the process of separation of Transcaucasia from Russia began.

This process juridically ended on April 9 (22), 1918, when the creation of independent Transcaucasia federation was declared, with the center in Tbilisi. The supreme state body of new-created republic was represented by a many-partied Same, the chairman of which was elected Georgian social-democrat, N. Chkheidze. The deputy-chairmen were the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

One of the most important problems, which stood in front of Transcaucasian government, was the questions of arrangement the situation with Turkey, because the War was lasting, the Russian army, which fought against Turkey, was decomposed, soldiers left their positions and returned at home, and new-established Georgian-Armenian groups couldn't stop the Turkish army. Azerbaijan refused to struggle against Turkey, which was of the same religion and ethnically related.

During the Pact negotiations with Turkey, there appeared the truth, how unreliable was the unifying of Transcaucasia. Between the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijanian deputations of Same, there existed the permanent discord. Azerbaijanian politicians were on the side of Turkey, which declared its territorial requirements to Transcaucasia. Georgia and Armenia were oriented towards Germany, to have the influence on its ally. And, with the help of interfering from Germany, Georgia avoided Turkish occupation. Turks occupied only South-West part with Batumi.

Life showed that Transcaucasia Republic was not a perspective creature. It didn't exist longer than two months and was destroyed after the inner resistances. On May 26, 1918 on the last meeting, Same officially declared the abolishment of Federation. In the evening of the same day, the sitting of "the national council" of Georgia was held, on which Georgia was declared as the Sovereign-democratic Republic. During the next two days Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence too.

Thus, on May 26, 1918 Georgian State, abolished 117 years ago, was revived. Georgian people accepted this fact with celebration. This historical event was the crown result of the national and social-liberating actions of XIX–XXs Georgia. This day, May 26 is celebrated as the national Independence Day in today's Georgia as well.

The first government of the Republic of Georgia was coalitional, though it consisted mainly of social-democrats. Social-democratic party was the strongest in Georgia. The leader of the party, Noe Zhordania (1868–1953) became the chairman of the government of Georgia.

The young republic stood in front of the hard economical problems. The World War caused the important damage to the economy, and the situation was hardened by the ceasing of economical relations with Russia and other countries. Industry and transportations were out of actions, there

was a lack of food. And the government had no any capital in the stable currency, while declaring the independence.

Germany recognized the independence of Georgia on May 28. But after the defeat of the central states in the World War I, the question of international recognition became actual again. Government of Georgia appealed with this question to the Paris Peaceful Conference. In 1920, after Turkey, Germany and Argentina, Georgia was recognized as de-facto by the Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. And after May 7, 1920, when Soviet Russia confessed the Independence of Georgia, the republic was recognized as de-jure by Antanta countries and other states.

The establishment of Georgian democratic republic was running in the most difficult political condition. At first, the country was not recognized by Russian "White Action", which had a motto of "Entire and Indivisible" Russia. Issues, concerning borders between Transcaucasian Republics were not arranged as well. In particular, Georgia had a territorial quarrel with Azerbaijan about Zakatala district. And Armenian Republic had a claim on South regions of Georgia, where the large part of population was of Armenian origin. In December, 1918 Armenian armies imprudently invaded Georgia but they were defeated. Military actions in Transcaucasia were ceased by the interference of English captainship.

In the South part of the disputable region, there was created so-called "Neutral Zone", with Georgian-Armenian administration. The entire jurisdiction of Georgia revived in this region only in November, 1920. In 1918–1920 there were local military move ments in South-West Georgia as well, in Abkhazia, on the territories inhabited by Southerner Osetians and in other regions, where armed actions took place. The important part of those actions was caused by the agitation of Communists.

In spite of these facts, the first hardest steps in creation the State were overcome. At the end of 1920, the marks of economical and political stabilization in the republic were noticeable. Georgia got back Batumi region, which was occupied by English after the defeat of Turkey in the World War. Science and culture began to revive. The high-educational organizations – the University and the Conservatoire, appeared in Tbilisi. And if not the new intervention and annexation, Georgia could get rid of the crisis and stand on the way to the independent development. But the things turned on the contrary. In 1920, the main counterrevolutionary forces in Russia were exterminated, and the process of re-annexation of every domain of the Empire, began. In the same year, Azerbaijan and Armenia were forced to accept the Soviet regime. So, by the beginning of 1921, Georgia with 78 per cents of perimeter of its land borders, was in the Soviet siege. From South-West part, the neighbor was the young Turkish Republic.

As it was mentioned above, between Georgia and Soviet Russia, there existed May 7, 1920 Agreement, according to which, Russia acknowledged the State independence of Georgia. In return, Georgia pledged the free local activity for Communists on its territory. But soon it became clear, that Russia needed this Agreement only to weaken Georgian sobriety and to create working conditions for its agents in Georgia. Moscow was preparing for military intervention and making the last independent Transcaucasian republics Soviet. It should be denoted, that the negative role for Georgia in this action, was played by the high-rank Georgian communists – I. Stalin, S. Orjonikidze and etc.

On February 12, 1921, in the region, contiguous to Armenia, communists arranged the peasant rebellion imitation, and on February 16, on the ground of the aid to the "rebels", Russian armies invaded Georgia. The main grouping of the rival side - the Eleventh Army, advanced Tbilisi from the territories of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Besides, the separate formations and subdivisions advanced Abkhazia and central Caucasian passes. After the bitter struggles near Tbilisi on February 25, 1921, the capital of Georgia fell. Georgian armies receded. Social-democratic government couldn't manage to organize the real public-general resistance. The situation aggravated on Turkey borders as well. On February 21, the government of Ankara required from Georgia to discharge the cities: Artvin and Ardahan. This requirement was accomplished, but Turks didn't stop and soon came to Batumi and Akhaltsikhe. On March 18, government of Georgia migrated abroad, and the Georgian military groups, left in Batumi, struggled with Turks and maintained the city. After Turks

receded, Batumi was occupied by Russia. By March 19 in all the main centers of Georgia there was established the Soviet government. And before that, on March 16, in Moscow, between Russia and Turkey there was made the agreement, according to which Artvin, Ardahan and some other territories were passed to Turkey.

Thus, Soviet Russia, from one side, violated the May 7, 1920 Agreement and implemented the actual annexation of Georgia. There was established the Communist dictatorship in the country.

## **Georgia in 1921–1945. Reinforcement of the Communist' Regime**

After occupation of Georgia by Lenin Russia, Communists began to depress the rival forces and to strengthen their power. Armed Forces of Democratic Republic, State and Elective Bodies and Non-Proletarian Parties were abolished. Privacy of lands was abolished as well, a whole industry, railways, fleet, banks etc. passed in the hands of the government. Punisher organizations held the massive shooting and exile on oppositionists of the regime and even suspected persons, especially, former officers and representatives of nobility and intelligentsia. With the aim of setting atheism, Communists destroyed churches, exterminated clergymen; only in 1922–1923 1500 churches were destroyed in Georgia.

In spite of bloody terror, anti-communistic actions took place in Georgia in 1921–1924. But they were disconnected and government easily managed to localize and suppress them. The most important movement took place in 1924. Rebels had contacts with immigrated government. Simultaneous actions in different regions were planned, but Communists arrested several rebellion leaders. So, the rebellion was not organized and it was cruelly suppressed.

Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia (it was officially called so by that time), was considered as the independent state at first, but its territory was occupied by Russian Army, and Georgian Communists acted only under Moscow orders. The plan of further state construction of Soviet Georgia was made in Moscow as well, which would simplify its steps into Soviet political and economical system.

Georgian SSR, in fact, was a federal state. At the end of 1921 on the ground of the Alliance Agreement, Abkhazia SSR (Autonomous Republic since 1931) entered its structure. Besides, there was created Adjara Autonomous Republic on Georgia territory in 1921 and South Ossetia Autonomous Region in 1922. Georgian SSR itself with Azerbaijan and Armenia, by the proposal of Lenin in 1922, was in Transcaucasia Federation, which entered USSR, created at the end of the same year. In 1936 Transcaucasia Federation was abolished, and Georgia directly entered Soviet Union structure.

From the second half of the 20s, swift processes of industrialization and collectivization began in Soviet State, the aim of which was maximal strengthening of existing regime. There were built a lot of factories, hydroelectric power stations and mines in Georgia. Coal and Manganese widely mined. Technical cultures, especially tea and citrus for the huge soviet market, were mastered in Agriculture. But enterprises, built in accelerated tempos were of a low quality. The sowing territories were widened after chopping woods. Setting monocultures in all regions lost the traditional light to Georgian many-sided agriculture.

Communist dogmatism in USSR considered industrialization and collectivization with the Cultural Revolution, as the main condition for socialism. So, in the 20–30s the amount of secondary and high educational institutions rose in Georgia. Science and Art developed. In 1940 there was established the Academy of Science of Georgian SSR. But from that very time the individual thinking abilities of the creative intelligentsia, literature and art representatives were reduced. Everything was obeyed to the Communist Dictatorship Ideology. With the aim of the final frightening and spiritual weakness of the several million population of Soviet Union, Stalin government ran the wide repressions in the second half of the 30s, which appeared in the first days of existence of the Communist Regime, but they became especially massive in 1937–1938. Georgia

was one of those regions of USSR, where the repressing engine was particularly active. During those years, there were shot thousands of innocent people in Georgia, and even more were sent in "Gulag" camps, where the most of them found their oppressed death. Among repressed people there were the best representatives of intelligentsia, including such remarkable representatives of Georgian culture, as writer M. Javakhishvili, poets T. Tabidze and P. Iashvili, stage-manager S. Akhmeteli, scientist-philologist Gr. Tsereteli, conductor E. Mikeladze etc. Villages were involved in the massive repressions as well, where thousands of peasants died from the public collectivization, which ended in that period.

Political repressions of 30s took lives of the Soviet army and Military-industrial complex personnel, which caused the blow to the self-defensibility of the country, but because of those very repressions, the fear, set in the society, strengthened the authoritative Stalin Regime and helped to mobilize all total forces of Soviet Union in the war against Germany, which started on June 22, 1941. There didn't actually take place military movements on Georgian territory (only in summer of 1942, Germans invaded Abkhazia and occupied one village), but the country sacrificed the maximum of its demographic and material resources in this war.

In Georgia, the population of which was 3612 thousand in 1940, there was a mobilization and sent in the active army 700 thousand people, and more than 300 thousands haven't returned back. The part of the people from Georgia fought in the national Georgian divisions and majority in the other parts of many-national Soviet army.

Georgians fought in partisan groups, as on the USSR territory, so in the countries occupied by Nazis. Among Georgians there were people, who stood for Germany and fought under its flag. Most of them acted on the ground of belief that the victory of Germany would bring the liberation for Georgia. But the amount of those people was scanty in comparison with these legions, which fought for the liberty of USSR.

Most of Georgians who fought in Soviet army, sincerely believed that they protected the "Socialism Property", which was at the high value rank of the Communist Propaganda in that time. Besides, a Georgian soldier knew that any place he fought, in Moscow, Ukraine or on Volga, he was defending Georgia from the horrors of the war and from that slavery, which was caused by Hitler regime to the occupied countries.

The home front laborers were ruled by the same aims as well, which played a big role in the victory over the enemy. The whole economic of Georgia worked with maximal power for the front. In spite of the conscription of the large part of qualified laborers, the machine-building and metal-working factories redoubled their productivity. The place of the soldier laborers at their machines took their wives, sisters and daughters. The large amount of armament, military materials and uniforms was produced. 200 new enterprises were built. Soviet collective farms highly implemented agricultural and production plans. Georgia sheltered also many thousands of evacuated people from the territories, occupied by Nazis. In the famous resorts and medical institutions, wounded Soviet soldiers had courses of cure.

Thus, the population of Georgia played an important role in that great victory, which was got in the struggle against Fascism by Soviet people.

## **Georgia in 1946–1992. Crisis of Soviet System. Decomposition of Soviet Union and Revival of Independence of Georgia**

After the World War II, economy of Georgia in several years became higher than it was before the war. New enterprises, water power stations, mines, irrigating channels etc were arranged. But the government kept the society under the heavy ideological pressure. The new repression wave appeared again, which was ceased only after the death of Stalin (1953).

The new Soviet government, the leader of which was N. Khrushchov, softened the inner political regime. Besides, in the 30–40s Stalin was accused to every crime, committed by the government. Nothing was said about the Soviet system perversion. On the XX Communist Party

Congress in February 1956, worshipping of Stalin was converted into the personal retaliations. Anti-Stalinist Company was tending to the opinion, that his repressive actions were conditioned by his Georgian origin.

Especially bitter was the critique of Stalin for Georgian youth, which was accustomed to the fanatical idolization of Stalin before by the official ideology. Besides, Georgian national feelings were offended. On March 3, 1956, separate manifestations took place in Tbilisi high educational schools, and on March 5, the situation in the city became unrulable. Demonstrations and meetings were held, where people required rehabilitation of Stalin, criticized the XX Congress solutions. Nothing was anti-Soviet in this action, but the government cruelly suppressed youth protest. On March 9, Soviet armies shot the participants of the meeting in the center of Tbilisi. More than 100 people died and about 300 people were wounded (the exact numbers are not known).

In fact, after the March tragedy, the wide layers of population of Georgia lost the Communist ideology belief. In the 60s, there began the period in Soviet Union, which was called "the Period of Motionlessness" afterwards. In spite of that, the great "Communism" reconstructions still were running, party and state functioners of different ranks reported to the higher authorities about new achievements, in fact, their words were far from reality. Corruption became of a total character as well. No one believed in official propaganda any more.

Falsity and dissimulation of the state politic level morally corrupted the Soviet society. Since the 60s, in Georgia and other USSR Republics, there widely set so-called "Shade Economic", which was the result of ignorance of the economical objective rules under administrative governance system.

The most radical expression of the progressive part of the society, opposed to the existing system, was the dissident movement, which started since the 60s. Among the Georgian dissidents, the most devoted and spiritually strong person was Merab Kostava (1938-1989). He was arrested for several times by the state security committee and served his term in the far camps of Russia.

By the 80s, it became clear to everyone that the rotten Soviet regime had no future perspective. In 1985, the leader of the country, M. Gorbachov tried to overcome the crisis with cardinal reforms. The "Restructuring" ("Perestroika") began, but the liberalization and publicity, connected to this process, appeared the gin from the bottle for Soviet Union. Architects of the "Restructuring" ("Perestroika") didn't know that the Soviet system built with blood and iron, had no "immunity" for democratic freedom, and as a result, the swift decomposition of this process began.

"Restructuring" in Georgia began with emphasizing national aspiration. In 1987, the first legal national political organization – Iliia Chavchavadze Society – was created. In a while, other similar organizations appeared as well. The leaders of the national movement, which became of a wide scale by 1988, were former prisoners, Georgian dissidents. Soon, the motto of Independence of Georgia was evidently shown. Soviet government, which in spite of the "Restructuring" periodically kept trying to hold forceful methods, used armies and armored technique towards the peaceful meeting participants in the center of Tbilisi. On April 9, 1989, at night, the meeting was attacked. 20 persons were killed; most of them were women. It must be notified that the April 9 tragedy happened on the same place, as March 9, 1956 bloodshed. But in 1989, the general situation in USSR was quite different. The bloody action on April 9 angered not only the whole Georgia, but the progressive society of Russia, which firmly rebelled against this fact. In those days in Georgia, there took place the national integrity. The government was forced to step back.

After April 9, the leadership of Georgian Communist Party lost its influence in the Republic. National movement became the main motive power for the political life of Georgia. Unfortunately, among the leaders of this movement there was not unanimity at all. M. Kostava, who tried to maintain the integrity of national powers, died in the accident. After his death, the powers, struggling for the independence, finally divided into two camps. The most popular in the public was the political block "The Round Table". The famous leader of this block was the former dissident, philologist, Zviad Gamsakhurdia (1938–1993). Exactly his personal popularity conditioned the victory (62% votes) of "The Round Table" after October 28, 1990 elections (the first many-partied elections in Georgia since 1921). Thus, it was a peaceful end of the Communist governance in Georgia.

Z. Gamsakhurdia soon became the president of the country, and during the period of his reign, the inner political situation in the Republic aggravated. Because of the inflexible, ambitious policy of Gamsakhurdia, the relations between the governing "The Round Table" and the rest opposite part became bitter. The condition in Autonomies was strained too, especially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Gamsakhurdia's nationalistic phraseology disturbed the ethnic minorities. If in 1981 the partial compromise with Abkhazia was managed, the conflict with Ossetia became the armed opposition. The reason of this was the abolishment of Autonomous Region of Ossetia by the Parliament of Georgia. This solution was provoked by the Ossetians, declaring the Autonomous Region as the Republic. It must also be notified that in Georgia of this period, one of the reasons of existing ethnical conflicts (and also the split in Georgian national movement), except the local radical actions, was, as it seemed, the hidden activity of special services of the Union, which used the tried imperial methods – "divide et impera".

Gamsakhurdia was on the way to the independence of Georgia in the relations with the Soviet center. On April 9, 1991, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Declaration of Independence but this Act, as declared from one side, wasn't internationally recognized.

In autumn, 1991, opposition between the Presidential government and the opposite side reached the flammable level. The role of detonator played the suppression of the non-sanction meeting of the opposition by the police in Tbilisi. The split appeared even in the closest encircling of Gamsakhurdia. President was denied by a large part of his main force structure – the National Guard. On December 22, 1991, military movements began between the rebelled guard and the guard of the Presidential Palace. "Tbilisi War" lasted till January 6 and ended with the flight of the President from Georgia. The armed fight, during which the rival sides used artillery and reactive projectiles, considerably damaged the central district of the city.

While the two wings of the national movement were busy with retaliations, there occurred the most important event in the world: Soviet Union was decomposed and the world recognized the independence of its republics de-facto and then de-jure.

Because of the disorder existing in Georgia, its juridical recognition was comparatively complicated. But after returning of the former Minister of Foreign Relations of Soviet Union, the worldwide famous politician, Edward Shevardnadze, the things broke through March, 1992. E. Shevardnadze was the first leader of Georgia in the first half of the 70–80s, and was well acquainted to the local situation. His return filled the large part of the population of Georgia with hope that the prolonged anarchy would end and the country would stand on the way to stabilization. Shevardnadze soon really managed to cease Georgian-Ossetian conflict through mediation of Russia. But the situation in Abkhazia and some Western regions, where the armed groups of the adherents of Gamsakhurdia acted, remained strained.

Return of Shevardnadze and coming of the temporary supreme governmental body of transitional period, State Council, into the supremacy became the signal for the world for juridical recognition of the state Independence. Already on March 23, 1992, Independence of Georgia was recognized by the Euro-union countries. On July 31 of the same year, Georgia was adopted in the UN Organization as its 179<sup>th</sup> plenipotentiary member. Thus, Georgia again came into the list of liberal states. The dream of the best Georgian representatives of the XIX and XX cen. fulfilled.

## **Georgia in Post Soviet Period**

State Council could not provide to establish peace in the country. Situation in Samegrelo Region, which was the main bearer for supporters of Gamsakhurdia, was unstable (the ex-president was hiding in Chechnya and invoked people for disobedience), and hard attempts of government to establish peace violently, in fact, were ended on the contrary. But the greatest mistake of the State Council, which is one of the main problems for Georgia, was to enter the troops into Abkhazia.

In Autonomic Republic of Abkhazia interethnic relations have been straining little by little in the period of Soviet government, especially since 40s. The main reason of it was vicious internal policy of the Communists (frame, demographic, school and etc.), though, as it is evident, sometimes

interethnic confrontations were aroused on purpose by certain services of the Soviet Centre to keep Abkhazia, and whole Georgia under stricter control.

Statements of the Abkhazians with different demands periodically had mass character (1956, 1967, 1978). Sometimes a slogan requiring separation from Georgia was heard in those requirements that caused protest actions of Georgians. It should also be mentioned that Georgian-Abkhazian opposition on household level has not received ethnical antagonistic character, which is proved with flock of mixed marriages. From multiethnic population of Georgia the Georgians have closest cultural relationships with Abkhazians and Ossetians.

By the end of 1980s, in the period of crisis of the Soviet government, when in Georgia and Abkhazia national movements were formed and got influences, Georgian-Abkhazian relationships were extremely strained. Actions and demands of the organizations of the Nationalistic directions, as a rule, had radical character. In spring of 1989 Abkhazia aroused the problem of separation from Georgia on social and political levels.

The burdening of the situation was encouraged by the policy of the leaders of the Communist Party who did not avoid even provoking the bloodshed. Ethno political confrontation in the Autonomic Republic got a worse form in summer of the same year when the very first bloody collision occurred. Fourteen people were killed.

Z. Gamsakhurdia, as it was mentioned, achieved certain compromise with Abkhazians in the legislative body – the Supreme Council – by allowing quotes, corresponding with it the Abkhazians who made 18% of Abkhazian population<sup>6</sup> received 43% of the deputy mandates. But the confrontation on other levels went on. The idea that modern Abkhazians came to the Black Sea coast 200-300 years ago and have not direct links with ancient population of those places dominated in Georgian propagandistic materials caused insults and offences of any representative of Abkhaz people, in spite of their political orientation. Such wrong theory that was not taken into consideration by the serious scientists became one of the main arguments of the Georgian side in the informational struggle since 1989.

After overthrow of Gamsakhurdia the State Council have not received the proposal about federalization of Georgia where Abkhazia would be represented as a subject of federation. On the background of civil confrontation existed in the country “the war of laws” started between Tbilisi and Sokhumi that minimized jurisdiction of Georgia in this autonomic unit.

After recognition of independence of Georgia the idea strengthened that the shortest way for restoration of jurisdiction of Georgia in Abkhazia was to show force to the “separatists”. Transferring of a lot of arms (tanks and other heavy machineries) by Russia to Georgia fostered the choice of regulation of the situation by force in favour of the centre in summer of 1992. It is supposed that Russian side did it on purpose, by involving Georgia into armed conflict to keep the handles of impact on the former Soviet Republic.

On August 14, 1992 Georgian governmental forces (that was not a regular army. Police contingents and especially different militarized formations, which received military skills during the civil war and Georgian-Ossetian conflict were sent to Abkhazia) crossed the administrative border of Abkhazia and entered Sokhumi – the capital of Autonomic Republic. At the same time in the remote North-West part of the country near Gagra navy crew was landed, which occupied roads and rail lines connecting Abkhazia with Russia.

The State Council stated that operation as planned for protecting the railway crossing Abkhazian territory, but the actions of the soldiers invaded Sokhumi did not resemble the actions of the defenders of transport highways. One of the first actions they did was to throw Abkhazian flag from the roof of Government House, which was not recognized by Tbilisi, and to fix Georgian flag.

Abkhazian part of government of the Autonomic Republic that moved to Gudauta (in the centre of densely inhabited by ethnic Abkhazians) appealed its people for resistance. It cannot be said that

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<sup>6</sup> The lack of specific share of ethnic Abkhazians among the population of Abkhazia was the result of their mass emigration in Ottoman Empire in 60–70s of XIX century and the development of deserted territories by other people (see p. 15).

Abkhazians did not expect such development of events. They have already had law enforcement infrastructure (though did not have enough amount of arms) and were in alliance with national movements of North Caucasus that had essential influence in the South part of Russia.

The leaders of Confederation of Highland People of the Caucasus (formed in 1991 in Sokhumi) demanded within ultimatum to withdraw military troops from Abkhazia, otherwise threatened by sending volunteers for carrying out military actions. Shevardnadze accepted rules of that game and claimed that in the squads of defence, formed in the whole Georgia responding to the ultimatum of the Confederates; more than 30 thousand people were united. Thus, the mechanism of war started and Georgia was involved into armed battles during more than one year.

By starting hostilities in Abkhazia the role of Moscow obviously appeared in this conflict. Both Georgians and Abkhazians struggled with Soviet arms supplied by Russia. It seems that supplying arms and other military equipments occurred through selling as well as through straight delivering.

People of the North Caucasus ethnically and culturally related (Kabardians, Adighei, Circassians, Chechens, Abazians and etc.) and the Abkhazian-Circassian Diaspora of nearest East supported Abkhazian minority<sup>7</sup>.

In autumn of 1992 about 4–7 thousands of Highland Confederation fighters arrived in Abkhazia. Besides, a lot of people of Slavonic nationality fought on the side of Abkhazians, especially from militarized organizations of the Kazaks. These various forces were motivated in different ways in Georgian-Abkhazian war, but on the whole, the fact of their participation enhanced victory of the Abkhazians. In spite of this, it should be mentioned that the main weight fell on ethnical Abkhazians in fighting against Georgians. Abkhazian formations represented the basic core of contradictory forces.

In October of 1992 Abkhazians took Gagra that activated the links between Gudauta and Gagra. The troops of State Council after that controlled only that part of Abkhazia, which was mainly populated by ethnical Georgians. Sokhumi became the key point for Georgians.

On October, 11 in 1992 Parliamentary elections were held in Georgia, which legitimised the authorities of the Country.

At the same time E. Shevardnadze was elected as a chairman of the Parliament and soon as a head of the State. Gamsakhurdia and his supporters in Chechnya did not recognise the legitimacy of October elections. The forces backing ex-president were acting evidently in Samegrelo region.

In such conditions it was difficult for Georgia to launch war against Abkhazia, furthermore the character of this war and main counter stayed to the end unknown for Georgian society. It was considered Abkhazian separatism or Russia, or Islamic “fundamentalism” (!)

After losing Gagra the Georgian Army being a mechanical unity of different squads particularly defended itself. In the beginning of 1993 several attacks of the Abkhazians on Sokhumi were beaten off, but strategically important points in the suburbs of the city were moved to Abkhazians. In these circumstances on July 27 of 1993 the agreement on fire ceasing was achieved. The agreement envisaged the demilitarization of conflict zone and creating necessary terms for restoring legitimate governmental bodies. The military troops of Russia deployed in Abkhazia were entitled to maintain neutralities. For keeping order in the region pollinational militia and internal troops should be formed where Abkhazian regiment and Georgian subdivision. Other Georgian formations as well as Abkhazian allying squads should be withdrawn from the territory of Abkhazia after ceasing fire at least in 10–15 days time.

Georgian side began to take heavy machinery that was its advantage away from Sokhumi, but the process of withdrawing the forces was obstructed, as by this time Georgian army formation deploying in Abkhazia was mainly consisted of local inhabitants and their disarmament or withdrawal from the region was not easy to do.

The Abkhazians considered it as breakage of the agreement and on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September unexpectedly resumed the attack on Sokhumi. The heavy battles lasted 12 days and ended in

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<sup>7</sup> According to the last account of USSR population in (1989) there were 105 thousands people of Abkhaz nationality in this country. 96 thousands ethnic Abkhazs lived in Georgia, and 94 thousands – in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia.



leaving the city by Georgians (September 27, 1993). Tbilisi only maintained a hardly approachable gorge in the mouth of the river Kodori. Bigger part of Georgian population (245 000 people) had to leave Abkhazia with the troops. These people became refugees in their own Country.

War lasting one year inflicted Abkhazia, the most beautiful area. Thousands were killed. Critical situation spread all over Georgia.

In these circumstances Z. Gamsakhurdia tried to regain authorities. In September he returned to his home country and led armed formations of his supporters. Ex-president made attempts to start marching from Samegrelo towards Tbilisi, but was defeated and died in uncertain circumstances (On 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1993). According to the version spread Gamsakhurdia committed suicide.

In spite of defeat in Abkhazia after 1993 the authority of Shevardnadze significantly strengthened in Georgia. Most of population still believed in an experienced leader and hoped that after stopping hostilities economical revival would start and geopolitical function of Georgia would increase in the world. Those hopes were mainly based on the plans of turning the country into transport corridor between East and West that was much written and spoken about. At the same time the realization of the future achievements in public opinion (especially by the impact of official propaganda) related to the name of Eduard Shevardnadze, his private relations and influence on world policy.

In the middle of 90-s loosened State Body step by step became stronger in the last period. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August Georgia accepted a new Constitution of independent State (symptomatically the terrorist attack on Shevardnadze coincided with this action, the Head of State and the others sitting in the car with him miraculously survived), Parliamentary elections were held, the post of president was restored, which was temporarily cancelled after overthrown Gamsakhurdia<sup>8</sup>.

President Shevardnadze was building Georgia with his old experience and with the help of old staff. A great deal of former party and Komsomol members came back to authority structures, who substituted the persons of anti-Soviet movement of "Perestroika". But Shevardnadze attracted some young politicians, who were not in touch with former party nomenclature. Their presence in government strengthened Shevardnadze's image of reformer and West orientation politician. Among those was the leader of Greens Party Zurab Zhvania, who in 1995 at the age of 32 took the post of Parliamentary speaker. The political bearing for Shevardnadze became a "Union of Georgian Citizens" that was formed by him, which obtained majority of seats in the Parliament by elections of 1995. Thousands of people became members of the "Citizens", most of them aimed at arranging their own careers "under roof" of presidential party. Bureaucracy of State Body and increasing of corruption connected to this fact became the symbol of Shevardnadze's epoch.

Tendencies of economical rise, as if conceived in further period of Abkhazian war, by the end of 90-s completely disappeared. In fact the laws did not function in Georgia, e.g. three out of four legal regulations were not accomplished. The sources of State budget did not function well (by some data only 1/7 of tax incomes entered state treasury). Greater part of donations granted by the West was grabbed by ruling strata. Delaying this way and that low wages and pensions became regular. Pre-election promise in 1995 of the Citizens' Union to create 1 million working places appeared to be a complete fiction. Hundred thousands of Georgian people had to go abroad for seeking jobs. Neither boosted international economical projects had obvious results in spite in 1999 the first experimental oil pipe-line transiting through Georgia and the terminal of Supsa operated (in the South of Poti), which supplied Azeri oil to industrialized world. It became clear to the publicity that the reforms and combating corruption stated by the president bore a formal pattern. Constant black outs of electricity and gas caused the dissatisfaction of population.

Shevardnadze could not overcome political dead-end arose by Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian armed conflicts. Self-claimed Republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not recognize jurisdiction of Georgia.

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<sup>8</sup> Eduard Shevardnadze was elected in 1995 and 2000 as a president of Georgia.

Through the mediation of International organizations (UN and OSCE) and “friendly countries” (USA, Russian Federation, Great Britain, France and Germany)<sup>9</sup> began the process of peaceful negotiations, but that did not gain any results; the sides kept complete contradictory positions that means that danger of restarting fire still exists.

Unsettlements of ethno political conflicts directly have impact on the fate of many refugees whose being in the country tenses current state even more.

Personality of Shevardnadze became the target of unsatisfied population caused by current situations (as before, he was expected to solve the key national problems). In 1999 the Parliamentary and in 2000 the Presidential elections were held in such conditions. The Union of Citizens won again but rumour of great falsifications during elections in favour of the authority spread.

Total freedom of speech existed in Georgia during Shevardnadze’s presidency was his merit. Great deal of mass media widely discussed situations underway and their acute critics towards authority and the president often got over the margins. But unfortunately, such freedom was associated with that total dissolution and impunity that reigned in the country.

On October of 2001 Georgian law enforcement bodies with the help of Chechen squads launched armed attack in Abkhazia was utterly defeated. It seems that the next failure of the government resulted in mass dissatisfactions of people. Attempt of coarse pressure on independent TV-company “Rustavi2” by authorities became a detonator. On November of 2001 a spontaneous protest actions were held in front of the Parliament and State Chancellery. Gathered people required the resignation of Shevardnadze.

Gap between the president and young “westerners” of the Citizens’ Union became obviously clear in this period. Zurab Zhvania left the post of parliament speaker. An outstanding representative of the new wing was a lawyer Mikheil Saakashvili who attracted attention in the Parliament for his critical statements towards officials. Reforms of the court system in Georgia related to Saakashvili’s name. In 2002 Saakashvili became a chairman of Tbilisi Sakrebulo.

After Zhvania Nino Burdjanadze who was supposed to be a compromising figure between the presidential group and parliament opposition, took the post of the speaker, but soon after Burdjanadze supported the opposition.

By this time the authority of Shevardnadze has already been shaken in the opinion of the Western friends of Georgia observing the current situation in the country. They say that the West political circles approved Saakashvili and Zhvania.

Georgian political forces were thoroughly preparing for the elections 2003. Ambitious political leaders discussed those elections as a stage for presidential struggling when the last term of Shevardnadze’s being as a head of the country was to end.

Forming of election blocks and alliances started. Soon it became clear that the unions formed by the politicians who had left the governmental party and joined by other political forces had a great influence<sup>10</sup>: 1) “National Movement” headed by M.Saakashvili, 2) “United Democrats” (leaders – N. Burdjanadze, Z. Zhvania). During pre-election period names of popular leaders appeared in the titles of oppositional blocks – “Saakashvili–National Movement” and “Burdjanadze–Democrats”, as a Georgian average voter votes more for a single leader than for political organization in whole.

24 election candidates took part in parliamentary elections appointed on November 2. Shevardnadze, whose bearing political organization – Citizens’ Union – has practically broken-up, that was left by the strongest political figures, formed an election union “For New Georgia”. That governmental block as it was called, differed with significant eclecticism. Different forces united under presidential “umbrella” were unified by wish of entering the Parliament.

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<sup>9</sup> The role of Russian Federation is to be notable, its troops with the status of peacemaking forces are in the conflict zones of Georgia-Ossetia and Georgia-Abkhazia (accordingly since 1992 and 1994). Many perceive it as hidden expansion in Georgia.

<sup>10</sup> In particular, political organizations have also been unified in the national movement: “Republic Party of Georgia” and “Union of National Forces”, and the “Union of Traditionalists” have joined the block of United Democrats.

In pre-election period with help of mass media and non-governmental organizations it transpired that mass falsification of the election lists were being prepared: essential part of potential electorate were not included in the voters' lists. Instead they found the names of those who died long ago. In spite of great fuss shortcomings were not improved as the influential forces were interested in rigging.

Elections of November, 2 were held with great activities of the population. People wanted cardinal changes in the country, that's why it was necessary to change existing authorities. But according to official results of elections that was published by Central Election Commission (CEC), the first place was gained by the governmental block "For New Georgia", and the second place – by "Democratic Revival Union" led by Aslan Abashidze, head of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. According to the same results "Saakashvili–National Movement" election block took the third place, and fifth place was gained by "Burdjanadze–Democrats".

A lot of local and foreign observers attended the Parliament elections in Georgia. Non-governmental organizations carried out parallel counting of votes. The result obtained by them utterly differed from the results from CEC.

In particular, in regards with alternative sources the first place was gained by the block of "Saakashvili–National Movement", the second place – "governmental block. Union "Burdjanadze–Democrats" gained the fourth place and the "Revival Union" – fifth one.

"National Movement" and "Burdjanadze–Democrats" did not recognize the results by CEC and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November came out with protests in the streets of the capital. They were joined by thousands of Tbilisians and people from different regions of Georgia. For 20 days the streets of Tbilisi were crowded by demonstrators and police subdivisions, and the situation often got to be explosive.

The events of November, 2003 displayed how unpopular Shevardnadze's rule was. Practically he had no supporters in public except group around the governmental block, which showed its inability of constructive actions.

Regardless, On November 22 Shevardnadze tried to open the first session of Parliament by the results of CEC, but Saakashvili and his supporters, who rushed into the Parliament hall, did not give the president that opportunity<sup>11</sup>. Demonstrators took up the buildings of the Parliament and State Chancellery. Police and armed forces went over to the people.

Next day, on November 23, the whole world turned its back to Shevardnadze<sup>12</sup>, who had to declare about his resignation from the presidential post.

Winner opposition, that has majority of supporters in Georgian society, came into the government of Georgia. Leaders of "National Movement" and "Burdjanadze-Democrats" called Mikheil Saakashvili as a presidential candidate, who gained absolute victory in the preterm presidential elections of January 4, 2004 (96% of voters). Such support of population gives authorities a chance to fulfil effective economical and social reforms in the country in order to take ascending way in Georgia in the beginning of XXI century.

*January 7, 2004*

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<sup>11</sup> It is to be emphasized that Saakashvili was holding a rose whilst entering the Session Hall, that's why the November dramatic events were considered as a "rose revolution". It was the most peaceful bloodless coup d'état despite the participation of thousands of people

<sup>12</sup> In compliance with the published materials in press Shevardnadze was vainly trying to get a political support from the USA and Russia. The press secretary of State Department yet on November 20 claimed on the briefing that the elections were falsified in Georgia and expressed his deep disappointment towards working authority in the name of USA leaders. The West countries stated that they were not going to intervene in the internal affairs of Georgia. Similar statement has been made by the command of Russian troops deployed in Georgia.

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Short sketch**

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