

# GEORGIAN AND EMIGRANT PRESS ON THE RESULTS OF THE AUGUST UPRISING OF 1924

## (Articles, Letters and Memoirs)

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**Abstract:** In February 1921, Soviet Russia managed to occupy the Democratic Republic of Georgia by force. In the same year, the Georgian national movement began, the goal of which was to restore Georgia's independence. The national movement, which began in 1921, ended with the August Uprising of 1924. The uprising did not bring Georgia victory, it was defeated, the Russian army defeated the Georgians who were driven by unity, the enemy managed to punish the best sons of the Georgian nation as an example, trying to break the spirituality of the Georgian people with terror in all corners of Georgia.

The failure of the 1924 uprising and its consequences outraged Europe, but no one extended a helping hand to Georgia.

After the occupation of Georgia, a part of Georgians scattered in different countries of the world conveyed this difficult situation of Georgia and their assessment of those years in their memoirs and letters. Many books have been written about these events, although the article uses only documents preserved in the Georgian emigrant funds preserved in the National Archives of Georgia, information published in the pages of the Georgian official press and the emigrant press. The issue of the uprising has always been relevant, it has been happening for years and is still being assessed today.

In 1924, a century has passed since the August uprising. Therefore, I considered it necessary to bring to you the history of the turbulent years from the history of Georgia with these notes. Chronological framework of the topic: 1921-1925.

**Keywords:** August Uprising, repressions, Georgian press, émigré press, Independence Day,

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**Introduction to the article.** In February 1921, Russia managed to occupy the Democratic Republic of Georgia by using military force. The national movement that began in the same year, the goal of which was to restore Georgia's independence, ended with the August 1924 uprising. The uprising did not bring Georgia victory, it was defeated, the Russian army defeated the Georgians who were driven by unity, the enemy managed to punish the best sons of the Georgian nation as in all corners of Georgia, they tried to break the spirit of the Georgian people with terror, a large part of them left their homeland and settled in Europe. The failure of the 1924 uprising and its consequences outraged Europe, but they were unable to help Georgia. After the occupation, some Georgians scattered in different countries of the world conveyed to us the difficult situation in their homeland in their memoirs, in correspondence with each other. Their notes also contained an assessment of the current events. They discussed both the consequences of the Russian occupation and their own mistakes. The mentioned events were covered by both the émigré and local press. The assessments of the opposing sides were absolutely different. The issue of the uprising has always been relevant, over the years and is still being evaluated today by both our and foreign historians. After a century has passed since this great event, I considered it necessary to bring to you on this topic part of the material available in the funds of the Democratic Republic of Georgia preserved in the National Archives of Georgia (in the form of letters and memoirs), part of the material published by our compatriots in emigration in periodicals and in the pages of

the Georgian press of the twenties, which concerns the above-mentioned uprising, Georgia and the repressions of Georgians, although I would like to note here that it is impossible to present it in its entirety with the material used in the topic.

Methods: The topic is based on information preserved in the funds of the Democratic Republic of Georgia preserved in the Central Historical Archive of Georgia, on the pages of the Georgian magazine „Samshoblo“ published in Paris in the 1920s, and on the official press of the Georgian SSR.

Discussion: The correspondence and notes preserved in the funds of Georgian emigrants are made both in pencil and in ink, the documents are partially damaged, faded, and the text is illegible. They tell us about the situation in Georgian society in 1921-1924, the addressees of the letters and the names of the authors are kept secret. For example: „Dear Hannibal.... According to your and Tadeo's views, we have more than once raised the issue of escape with our prison comrades, but they are against this trade, except for our Zakarias.... His letters are needed. We saw you with all the victories, your Muralkhan.. (HAG, f.1861, a 3, s. 132, p. 59.)

In the years after the Sovietization, people still „celebrated“ the Independence Day of Georgia, May 26. Appeals written to the people were secretly published:

From the Georgian Young Marxist Organization, the Tbilisi faction of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, and, no matter how strange it may be, from the Russian Committee living in Georgia, they called on the Georgian population against those who trampled on the freedom of Georgia:

“People, all of you march under the banner of the liberation of Georgia and publicly declare for everyone to hear:

“Long live independent, democratic Georgia...

Long live the day of the declaration of independence of Georgia – May 26..

Long live the brotherhood of peoples, Georgia liberated from the Bolshevik yoke...

Down with the Bolshevik occupation... (f.1861, a.1, s.132, p. 37.)

In anticipation of May 26, the government strengthened throughout Georgia, especially in Tbilisi Repressions. By May 17, more than three hundred Georgian officers, militia leaders, leading workers of railway and tram workshops had already been arrested in the capital and imprisoned in the basements of the „Cheka“. The „Zakcheka“, „Gruzcheka“, „Ruscheka“ worked together.

On May 23, 1922, the day off of Georgia's Independence Day – May 26 – was canceled and February 25 was introduced instead. „We hereby declare publicly, in accordance with the resolution of the Presidium of the Executive Committee, that the real Independence Day of Georgia is February 25, and not May 26, ... the day when Georgia was liberated.“ The Chairman of the Executive Committee: F. Makharadze and Secretary T. Kalandadze ( f.1861, a.1, a.132, p. 23 ).

From the end of May, despite great opposition, people were secretly gathering in almost all cities of Georgia. In Batumi, bells began to ring from all churches in the morning. The government was taking measures in advance, from May 20-22, the arrests of suspects began, the heads of the districts received a warning: „Leave the people alone, do not spare them, catch the most rebellious and shoot them if necessary.“ On May 23, leaflets for May 26 were distributed, from the morning of May 24, people began to gather in front of the city government, railway employees, student youth and all residents of Batumi rushed to the designated place, national and black flags were unfurled. „Glory“ was heard in the unison of the student youth. Everyone from the nearby streets and bazaars raised the flags of the people, orators came out – „Georgia is not dead, the Georgian people will break the yoke of slavery, long live free Georgia“. The demonstrators went to the cemetery of their brothers, but the Chekists closed all the streets and captured a large part of them.... All the institutions of Batumi went on strike, the railway, the port stopped, the situation was terrible, the strikers were dismissed from their jobs and most of them were arrested. That night, 125 women were arrested, and in total, 413 people were arrested in one night. But after all this, the communist press published information that this day in Batumi passed peacefully. (f.1861, a. 3, s. 132, p. 55). In Kakheti, On May 24, 25, and 26, meetings and

rallies were held in the Signaghi region. People everywhere adopted resolutions against Russian rule, five hundred literate people signed them, and everyone took an oath to fight for the freedom of Georgia to the last drop of blood. A similar situation existed in other regions.

Our compatriots living in Europe responded to these news. The Georgian magazine „For the Fatherland“ published in Paris, in an introductory article, which belonged to Kakutsa Cholokashvili himself, spoke, along with congratulations, about the mistakes made in the past and about the Georgian knights fighting for freedom. He noted: „The reality surpassed even the dream of a courageous nationalist... The circumstances in which Georgia found itself when it restored its independence were precisely the realization of a wish; a broken Russia was engulfed in civil war,... Georgia was united as it was during the time of Queen Tamar... Better conditions were not needed for the self-consolidation of the newly born independence... But these conditions could not be used, the charming vessel of independence placed in that rare environment had no content, it lacked soul, we could not feel, We couldn't realize what great fortune had befallen us... He also recalls the patriots shot on May 19, 1923....

The article ends on a hopeful note: May 19th cannot be celebrated with feelings or words, but only with deeds: „By restoring Georgia's independence, they fought and died for it, we will fight and die for it“ (Journal „For the Fatherland“, 1925, No. 2). <sup>1</sup>

The arrests and executions of people took on a massive character in all regions of Georgia. „Pavel“ tells us the news of Guria in his correspondence with „Archil“: „Guria is being destroyed, a few days ago, 12 people were shot in front of the people in the center of Ozurgeti, they were lying on the street for three days and nights... They no longer publish the lists of those shot, they are taken out of their families at night and shot. The young people have taken refuge in the forests, but their parents and the very old are thrown into prisons, the houses of the fugitives are being demolished and the material is being taken to Ozurgeti... The fate of Guria is shared by all of Georgia.... As it turns out, the chairman of the Comintern, Zinoviev, when he was in Tbilisi, ordered „Oka“ – the United Army of Transcaucasia, that within two months everything in Georgia should be eliminated, so that not even a trace of the opposition remained. This meant the extermination of the entire Georgian people. (f. 1861, a.3, p. 127, p. 57).

In 1925, the magazine „For the Fatherland“ reported on the completion of the trial of the Georgian Independence Committee.

The trial began on July 15 at 12:05. The chairman of the court was G. Vashadze, members: I. Sturua and Tsintsadze. 47 people were brought to justice:

Mensheviks: Andronikashvili, Oniashvili, Jinoria, Tsintsabadze, Kartsivadze, Beltadze, Anjaparidze, Mamaladze, Shengelia, Kalandarishvili, Panozishvili, Bilanishvili, Kakhiani, Ioseliani, Lashkhia, Lataria, Dzadzamia, Pichkhaia, Pantsulaia Khurtsidze and Esvanji; – a total of 21 people;

National Democrats: Javakhishvili, Ishkhneli, Khoperia, Kalandarishvili, Pirveli, Tvaladze, Natsvlishvili, Avalishvili, Beridze;

Socialist-Revolutionaries: Bochorishvili, Lortkipanidze, Kvirikadze.

57 people were summoned as witnesses;

They were accused of organizing an armed uprising in Georgia with the aim of overthrowing the Soviet government, of connecting with foreign states for the purpose of intervention, of organizing terrorist acts and of espionage.

1. The magazine „For the Fatherland“ was published in Paris in 1925. Publisher: Felix, Kaldenbach; Editor: Spyridon Kedia;

The trial lasted 18 days. The death penalty was decided for Andronikashvili, Javakhishvili, Ishkhneli and Jinoria, however, due to special considerations, it was commuted to 10 years of imprisonment, while those who were sentenced to three years of imprisonment were fully released, since the time spent in prison was considered part of the sentence. („For the Fatherland“, 1925, N. 6“).

The uprising was defeated, but the Social Democrats did not intend to stop; they were trying to establish contact with the population remaining in Georgia and, with their help, overthrow the Bolshevik government. The military head of the Warsaw Center, Kazbegi, informs the former president of the

Independent Republic of Georgia, Noe Zhordania, in a letter: „.... I inform you that a sufficient number of proletarian workers have already been found... 261 people sign the collective protest of the Mensheviks against the Bolshevik government. They promise to organize an armed uprising against Bolshevism. (“The Communist“, 1924, No. 225).

The Georgian Orthodox Church was in a terrible state. In this regard, the correspondence between Archil and Pavle is also interesting: „The seizure of the church has become the main focus of people’s attention, today they are removing metal crosses from the dome, believers are outraged, the entire population has taken to the streets, but this has taken on another, more noteworthy and dangerous aspect for us, people of different faiths have confronted each other, this had a special resonance in Adjara. People of different faiths were alarmed by this news. They thought that this was the first step on the part of Christians, and then they would take away the mosques. Therefore, the issue was seriously raised among the influential people of Adjara „Muhajirizm“ – exile to the Ottoman Empire, they are just waiting for the right time, some are sure that the war will start and then they will be given the opportunity, while others are thinking about leaving right now. The sad thing is that everyone blames Georgians for these events, and if we do not take any measures, Adjara will turn its back on us. We want to explain the real situation, but this explanation will not help when such a large base for fanaticism has been created, not only among Muslims, but also among Christians. In Batumi, the military „Sobor“ was closed, because of this a public meeting was called in the theater, big news was spread, embittered Russian women came out against the communists, they turned us over and now they are taking away our shrines, why didn’t you take away the synagogue, how many thousand liras did you give for the benefit of mosques in Adjara? „What have you done to the Orthodox?“ (f. 1861, a.3, s. 127, p. 47).

Il churches on the territory of Georgia, with their courtyard buildings, were to be transferred to the Communist Youth Union of Georgia for educational and cultural activities (f. 1861, a.1, s. 123).

The Georgian people, both local residents and immigrants, with the help of the Central Committee of the National Democratic Party, appealed to the head of the United States Labor Organization – Samuel Gompers and the workers’ organizations of European countries, to the convening committee of the International Workers’ Congress, united in Hamburg. But help was nowhere in sight and was impossible, because the Bolshevik Party at the head of the country declared that peace reigned in the country. There were consoling letters. From Berlin-Charlottenburg, old Karl Kautsky He wrote: „I do not have many years left to live, but nevertheless I hope to experience those happy moments again when I learn that the Georgian Social Democratic Republic has once again been freed from its oppressors...“ (F. 1861, A.3, S. N 127, F. 81).

The uprising suffered defeat, there were repressions and there were great casualties, which destroyed the advanced Georgian society. Of course, it had certain reasons for its defeat. At the meeting of the party organization in Paris, the former chairman of the Constituent Assembly of independent Georgia, Karlo Chkheidze, made an extensive report on the reasons for the defeat of the 1924 uprising: „The Georgian people have fought a lot for freedom, they have sacrificed a lot for freedom. Great deeds are never accomplished without sacrifice. There is no doubt about that... They say it is too late to talk about defeat, but the uprising gave us one big plus, our issue has become an international issue forever... Moscow also clearly saw how strong the Georgian people’s longing for freedom, their fight for independence is, ... Apart from this great goal, this uprising had no other contributing reason, no one would have given us a guarantee of this from the outside, but the guarantee of defeat was almost in sight“... In his opinion, the main reason for the defeat was in the method of fighting, in the tactics... „The gun seemed to have been fired on purpose....the uprising and the consequences that followed it made the issue of Georgia’s independence even more acute and it is this acuteness that obliges us to take a correct account in the coming struggle, this account must be conveyed by our party to the people... The Georgian uprising found a great response in Europe, although no one promised any help other than moral support, and they did not promise this to Georgia. Despite the mistakes, the August 1924 uprising

in Georgia will remain a shining episode in the life of the Georgian people, will remain an inexhaustible source of immortality... (f.2115, A. 1, p. 69).

Spiridon Keidia assessed the period after the uprising in Georgia in an article published in the newspaper „Samshoblo“ in July 1925... The Georgian people embarked on the path of active action against the Russian occupation authorities since 1921. He recalls the Svaneti uprising, and gives a particularly high assessment to the Dusheti uprising of 1922. Which was led by Bidzina Cholokashvili, Kote Cholokashvili, Suslik Andronikashvili, Shakro and Data Vachnadze. Their speeches caused serious damage to the government's armed forces. The uprising took place under very favorable conditions: it was a spontaneous uprising against the still unconsolidated Soviet regime, political parties were still completely intact... If the intrigues of political parties had not occurred, the Cholokashvili uprising would have had a greater chance of victory than the 1924 uprising. Since February 1921, Georgia, which had been part of the Soviet Union, was developing among the republics united in the union. By 1925, the country's budget expenditure was estimated at 14,247,217 gold rubles, and its income was 13.5 million rubles. Although there was not a big difference between income and expenditure, in the article Sp. Keidia asks the question: It is interesting who was feeding whom, Georgia or Russia, Georgia. Moscow brought: income from the Georgian post-telegraph, railway credit operations, oil pipelines, black stone, and as the author notes, due to Russia's national policy, Georgian customs lost 4.5 million rubles in income per year. („For the Motherland.“ 1925, N3 ).

Delegations of workers from different countries often came to Georgia, on June 15, 1925, a delegation consisting of four members of English workers and women arrived from Russia. They visited a tobacco factory, visited the State University, where the delegation was hosted by the university's rector Ivane Javakhishvili, professor Petre Melikishvili and professor K. Kekelidze. When the delegates were told that 80% of the university students were the children of workers and peasants and that they studied almost free of charge, one delegate said with a smile, „There were such conditions for continuing their studies here, we can also stay here to study“... They toured the workers' houses in Kojori, various districts of Tbilisi. They returned to Moscow by military means.

On July 29, a delegation of the Belgian-French trade union visited Georgia, and in two days they toured the workers' clubs, factories and mills of Georgia, from Tbilisi to Baku on July 1.

On July 1, they returned from Tbilisi to Baku.

February 1921 brought many innovations to the life of the Georgian people. The population of Georgia was physically and morally divided into two parts. The population of Georgia was physically and literally divided into two parts: a small part that escaped the Russian aggression that had entered Georgia and fled abroad, and a large part that remained in place and took upon itself the plague and famine that had spread in this country. A large part of Georgians settled in central Europe and continued to live there, a large part of them settled in France. Both in France and in other European countries, Georgian unions, associations, and societies were created that cared about the popularization and future of Georgia – the Georgian Association of France, the Georgian Students' Union, the „International Association for Georgia“ in Geneva, the „Society of Friends of Georgia and Transcaucasia in New York“, the „Military Union of Georgians“, the „Society of Georgian Patriotic Women“.

Societies in Europe and America contributed to the celebration of the Georgian national holiday, and in addition to such dry evenings, concerts by Georgian composer and pianist Erekle Jabadari and Georgian pianist Irakli Orbeliani were held in central Europe.

„Georgia Abroad“ provided information to the readers of the magazine „For the Motherland“ with the following column: In the column of May 26, 1925, we read:

1. The Georgian Association of France celebrated the national holiday at nine o'clock in the evening, which was opened with the Georgian anthem, after the welcoming speeches (the speakers were Ak. Chkhenkeli and Sp. Keidia), a concert of Georgian „Khoros“ was held..... The magazine provided information on the solemn gatherings and concerts held in central Europe to celebrate the heroism of Georgians („For the Motherland“, 1925. N2)

Georgian newspapers, in particular „Komunisti“ did not leave the Mensheviks' letters unanswered.... This was a source of distortion and lies about the events taking place in Georgia, mainly coming from the Mensheviks in France, who were fed the lies that came from Georgia. They were spreading it in newspapers that were hungry for sensations and hostile towards us. And the main „editor“ of these rumors was Noe Zhordania himself. Here the author draws attention to the newspaper. On the article published in „'Quotiden“ „The Bolsheviks received help by sea and landed troops in Batumi. They resort to bloody repressions against the inhabitants: they kill the elderly, women, children. The railway line is strewn with the murdered people. Houses are being burned, the villages in the vicinity of Batumi are engulfed in flames, the entire population of Batumi who can bear arms is involved in the fighting. Jordan appeals to the editor of the newspaper to intervene in this matter and stop the bloodshed of the Bolsheviks. The author notes that the government is introducing to the people a telegram published by the commission of the local government of Demonsau, the newspaper „Matenne“ reports that the commission is ready to legally recognize the Soviet government. Moreover, information about Georgia is disappearing from the pages of the official press of France as a whole ... „The bourgeois press, even the newspaper „Forvertsits“ refuses They say „To print detailed military reports-information about the Menshevik adventure.“ (nev. „Komunisti“, 1924, No. 231).

**Conclusion.** Despite such a hopeless attitude, the Mensheviks' decision was unchanged. Which was very well expressed in his words by Karlo Chkheidze: „We will never enter into an alliance with Bolshevik Russia“... (f. 2115, a.1, p. 69,).

After the defeat of the 1924 uprising, the Georgian official press was already boldly declaring its final victory: „Menshevik-noble banditry has been defeated, the gang of bandits has been destroyed. The heavy hand of the workers' dictatorship will crush the rest who have drawn their swords to crush it. Physical slaughter and extermination – this is the answer of the workers' dictatorship, this is what we promise to the enemies and traitors of our people! Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat! Long live communism!“ („nev Communisti“, 1924, No. 201).

Despite its mistakes, the August 1924 uprising in Georgia will remain a shining episode in the life of the Georgian people, will remain an inexhaustible source of immortality.

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2. Newspaper „Samshoblo“ – a national-political organ, Paris, 1925 NN 2,3,6;
3. Central Historical Archive of Georgia: F. 1861, a. 3, f: NN 123, 127, 132;
4. F. 2115, A. 1, S. NN 21, 69;