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**NATIONAL-DEMOCRATIC ORIENTATION NEWSPAPER “SAKARTVELO”**

**1915-1921**

**(PROBLEMS OF ABKHAZIA, SAMACHABLO AND SAINGILO)**

**DISSERTATION**

**SUBMITTED FOR OBTAINING AN ACADEMIC DEGREE OF  
THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN JOURNALISM**

The paper is prepared at  
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TBILISI 2011

## **Introduction**

The history of Georgian press of the beginning of the XX century has been studied just fragmentally as yet. The seventy-year communistic prohibition has essentially hampered the study process of the public thinking of that period. That is why the study of Georgian printed editions of 1900-1921 is currently a big challenge for modern scientists. The task is getting more difficult to cope with due to two circumstances. The first one is a great deal and variety of magazines and newspapers published in that period; the second one is complexity of the epoch.

According to the researcher of Georgian press of the beginning of the XX century Shota Gagoshidze, in 1900-1921 the total number of editions in Georgia was 471 (Gagoshidze Sh.; Tb.; 2004; p. 3). Among them are literary, field-specific, Russian-language and other language magazines and newspapers and, above all, party press. As the beginning of the XX century in Georgia is the period of origination of various political parties, then of their dividing and setting up of new parties.

Simultaneously with this process new periodicals were created, closed and founded under different names. Most of them had short life, which cannot be said about the subject of our study – the daily newspaper “Sakartvelo”. Though with interruptions, but it has been publishing for six years.

**The goal of the research paper was to study the press organ of the National Democratic Party of Georgia published in 1915-21 – the daily newspaper “Sakartvelo”, namely, to analyze newspaper publications devoted to problems of three regions of Georgia – of Abkhazia, Samachablo and Saingilo.**

We have selected materials about these regions, which are not under Georgian jurisdiction as of today and the separation process of which was intensively going on as far back as in the beginning of the XX century. In order to achieve the goal we have set the following **tasks**:

- a) Collection and study of publications on these issues published in the newspaper “Sakartvelo”;

- b) Study of historical reality of Abkhazia, Samachablo and Saingilo of 1915-21 relying on scientific literature;
- c) Contextual analysis of the obtained material and comparison with historical reality.

**Topicality of the theme.** As territorial integrity is currently the most burning and vital problem for Georgia, the dissertation theme is topical as it reflects separation process of Abkhazia, Samachablo and Saingilo from single Georgian space. This process began centuries ago and confusions accumulated drop by drop have finally torn these age-old regions off the single Georgian space.

We suppose that topicality of the dissertation is conditioned by problematic character of the territorial integrity of Georgia and by the fact the Georgian press of the XX century is not studied.

The paper will provide the researchers interested in the current ethnical conflicts in Georgia, also political scientists, specialists of the history of political parties in Georgia, journalists and all scientists, who will have an intension of scientific comprehension of the reality of Georgia of the beginning of the XX century with noteworthy information.

**Founding of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”.** The newspaper “Sakartvelo” has been founded by the well-known Georgian politician, one of the founders of the National Democratic Party, Spiridon Kedia. Firstly he shared political ideals of Social Federalists and because of active cooperation with this party he even had to escape from Georgia, but later on he completely dissociated himself from the views of social federalists. After seven-year living in Europe and obtaining of the higher education in France in 1914, right after the beginning of the First World War, Spiridon Kedia arrived to Georgia. He wished to establish periodical organ, which would serve not some certain class, or social strata, but the whole Georgian nation, and also those non-ethnic Georgians living in Georgia, who supported the idea of restoration of statehood of Georgia.

He began to quest for moneyed assistance for establishing of a newspaper in powerful Georgian colony in the city of Baku. The initiative was approved by Georgians living in Baku, who rendered him financial assistance. According to the researcher of Sp.

Kedia's biography, Georgian historian Otar Janelidze, "this sum has been generally spent for purchase of a printing house".

"At that time a magazine of the National Democratic orientation "Klde" (Rock) was published. It was weekly edition with 700-750 numbers of printed copies and during three years of its existence it managed to break "the wood of life clouded with hopelessness". The magazine was surrounded by firm group of national figures consisting of Revaz Gabashvili, Shalva Amirejibi, Shalva Karumidze, Davit Kasradze, Davit Vachnadze, Dimitry Javakhishvili, Aleksandre Proneli (Kipshidze), etc. Now Sp. Kedia addressed the members of this group. They come to an agreement to found a daily newspaper on the basis of "Klde", which in comparison with the magazine would better serve the same goals and would broaden even more "the path cut to national future of Georgia".

Questing of funds for founding of a newspaper continued also in Georgia. Archimandrite of Kutaisi, Nazari sent for this purpose 800 rubles, and marshal of noblemen of Tbilisi (Kartli-Kakheti) province, Dimitry Cholokashvili allotted 5000 rubles. Moneyed assistance for establishing new newspaper was also rendered by brothers Dzegvelashvili trading with fish products in Tbilisi and by other private persons" (Janelidze O.; Tb. 2002, p. 44).

The first edition of "Sakartvelo" appeared in 1915, in one week after closure of the magazine "Klde" (17 May), i.e. on May 24. This is how the daily newspaper "Sakartvelo" has been founded. In 1915-16 it also has illustrated weekly appendix, which ceased its existence in 1917.

**Editors.** During the six-year existence the newspaper had four editors. It was caused by party split. After each dissent in the party the newspaper "Sakartvelo" changed its leader.

**The first editor** was the well-known Georgian poet and dramatist Aleksandre/Sandro Shanshiashvili. He has been managing the newspaper since 24 May 1915 till 12 April 1917.

**The second editor** was the well-known publicist, one of the founders of the National Democratic Party, Grigol Veshapeli (Veshapidze), who has been in charge of the newspaper since April 1917 till 15 August 1918.

**The third editor** was the well-known literary man, publicist, critic and translator, Geronti Kikodze. He has been at the head of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” since 15 August 1915 till 18 May 1919.

**No one knows who was an editor from the issue #133 of 1919 to January 1920. Either the newspaper is not published in this period, or its issues are not kept at book depositories.** On 18 May 1919 the third editor of “Sakartvelo”, Geronti Kikodze deserted both his post at the newspaper and the National Democratic Party. Issues of 1919 are not kept at the Department of Kartvelology (Georgian studies) and Periodicals of the Public Library of Georgia. And in collection kept at the Foundation of Society for the Spreading of Literacy Among Georgians, i.e. at Protected (F) Foundation there are no “Sakartvelo” issues of 1919 after #133. It is unknown whether numbers following #133 of 1919 have ever been issued.

Here we have two versions: either the newspaper was issued, but the Public Library does not have its numbers, or the newspaper was not published after #133 of 1919 to January 1920. In any case, we are unable to establish who was in charge of the newspaper during that period of time, i.e. since May 1919 till December inclusive.

**Editorial Board founded by “Tbilisi Committee of Traders and Industrialists”** – since January till 9 April (or possibly 15 April) 1920 “Sakartvelo” has been published by the Editorial Board set up by “Tbilisi Committee of Traders and Industrialists”. The statement about that was published in #17 of 1920 of “Sakartvelo” (p. 4). That is exactly why “Sakartvelo” is just a newspaper of news, slight informational items. Even the contexts of news stories are generally drawn up with priority to the trade-industrial subject area.

**The fourth editor** was Spiridon Kedia, who was in charge of the newspaper from August 1920 to its closure, i.e. 23 February 1921. “It is evident that it was not easy for Kedia to be the chairman of the Party, to be engaged in the founding meeting and at the same time to be the editor of a daily newspaper, but he worked hard and found enough time for everything”. (Janelidze O.; Tb. 2002, p. 44).

**The well-known publicists.** “Sakartvelo” cooperated with famous Georgian writers, poets, historians and public figures from different fields. Among them are writers – Mikheil Javakhishvili, who wrote letters for “Sakartvelo” under the penname M. Adamashvili,

Grigol Robakidze (Givi Gollend), Vasil Barnov; poets – Titsian Tabidze, Valerian Gaprindashvili, Giorgi Leonidze. “Tsisperkantseli” Leli Japaridze appeared in this edition as a journalist, who in 1918-1919 was in charge of the column “In the Parliament of Georgia” containing reports describing work of the Parliament of Georgia, and later on of the Constituent Assembly.

The well-known journalists and publicists worked for the newspaper “Sakartvelo”: - Davit Kasradze, Shalva Amirejibi, Shalva Karumidze, Data Vachnadze, Giorgi Gabashvili, Giorgi Gvazava, Zakaria Edili, Niko Tavdgiridze, Rafiel Ingilo/Ivanitsky, Mose Janashvili, Ilia Chkonia, Apolon Tsuladze and many other interesting figures, whose journalistic activity is the subject of separate study.

It is natural that the editors of the newspaper, especially – Grigol Veshapeli, Geronti Kikodze and Spiridon Kedia – appear as authors of many important editorial letters. Many of these letters were devoted exactly to the issue of territorial integrity of Georgia.

Niko Tavdgiridze and Zakaria Edili were those two who more often wrote about **Abkhazia**. Though, very interesting article on borough Ilori and the Church of St. George of Ilori was published by the Archimandrite (later on Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia) Ambrosi Khelaia under the pen-name “Am-Ber” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #25). Also, it worth to mention the editorial of Grigol Veshapeli “For Abkhazia” (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #107; p. 2) and several literary-publicistic letters of Grigol Robakidze (under the pen name Givi Gollend).

Among letters published on **Samachablo** publications of Shalva Amirejibi and Geronti Kikodze are worth to be mentioned. The article of Z. Edili “Ossetians of Georgia (impressions of the traveler)” published in numbers 203 and 207 of “Sakartvelo in 1918 also deserves attention. An interesting feature story “The traveler’s something” belongs to the journalist (agronomist by profession) Apolon Tsuladze\*<sup>1</sup> (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; #211; p. 3). Articles of Leli Japaridze and Davit Kasradze about the second riot of Ossetians in Sachkhere also deserve consideration.

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\*Apolon Tsuladze intensively covered in the newspaper “Sakartvelo” Adjara and way of life of Adjarians.

**Saingilo** problems were more frequently covered by two famous Ingilo – Rafiel Ingilo (Ivanitsky) and Mose Janashvili, also the journalist Ilia Chkonia. Many interesting letters about Saingilo belong to Zakaria Edili. Especial attentions deserves editorial of Spiridon Kedia describing problem of spread of Georgian literacy in Saingilo (“Sakartvelo”; 1915; #10; p. 1).

Among names listed above Zakaria Edili is a kind of exception, as in comparison with others he covered problems of all the three regions more intensively. Besides, he wrote about Saingilo most frequently, has devoted many letters to Abkhazia, and has published one, but very interesting letter about Samachablo.

**Paper structure.** Besides the introductory and closing chapters our paper consists of main three chapters. The first chapter covers analysis of publications devoted to Abkhazia, the second – to Samachablo, and the third one – to Saingilo.

The chapters are divided into subchapters according to problems. From the volume point of view, the most voluminous is the letter devoted to Abkhazia, which consists of four chapters. The most extensive among them is the chapter, where we have tried to describe the current separatist movement in Abkhazia.

The part devoted to Samachablo is comparatively small, and the part devoted to Saingilo is even smaller. Such inequality is caused by different number of articles published about the regions.

Publications about Abkhazia in “Sakartvelo” exceed. It has its own objective reasons: just in 1918 in Abkhazia there were three armed attacks of Bolsheviks and two attempts of political revolution. Besides, in the end of 1918 and during the whole 1919 Abkhazia was the arena of confrontation of volunteer army of the White Guard General Denikin and the army of the Republic of Georgia.

As much tense was this period in Samachablo. Namely, after declaration of independence of the Republic of Georgia there were three riots by inspiration of Bolsheviks in this region. Though, as opposed to Abkhazia, in Samachablo provocations were planned just by one external force – Bolshevik Russia, whereas in Abkhazia three external forces – Turkey, White Guard Russia and Bolshevik Russia – replaced each other causing stress.

Inherently, Saingilo situation is absolutely different. If among population of Abkhazia and Samachablo there was separatist mood, in Georgians of Saingilo there either was no such mood, or was, but very faint – and even in this case among Moslemified (Lekified) population of Saingilo. Besides, Saigilo was occupied by force and Moslemified territory, which, even though preserved reminiscences of historic native land, but had no power to fight with them for restitution.

In addition, in the end of the dissertation, as an appendix we have added the list of collected publications on Abkhazia, Samachablo and Saingilo. This list is not exhaustive, as the collection of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” kept at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia is quite incomplete. The list of issues, which are not kept at the Public Library, is attached to the list of publications.

Of course, the appendix to our paper cannot fill up the gap caused by absence of thematic indexes of periodicals of 1900-1921. Though, we hope that this list will facilitate the work for those, who study problems of Abkhazia, Samachablo and Saingilo, and for those, who are interested in Georgian press of the XX century.

## **I Abkhazia**

The chapter devoted to Abkhazia consists of four subchapters. The first subchapter – **Abkhazian in the first twenty years of the XX century** – describes administrative, demographic, social and economic and political situation of the region. The second subchapter is devoted to **separatism and anti-Georgian movement in Abkhazia seen through eyes of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”**; the third subchapter covers publications reflecting **criticism of the policy of Menshevist government in Abkhazia**; the fourth subchapter deals with **statistics of articles about Abkhazia published in the newspaper “Sakartvelo” and review of names and pen names of the journalists working on this topic.**

**1. Abkhazia in the first twenty years of the XX century.** By 1917 Abkhazia consisted of Samurzakano, Gudauta, Gumista, Kodori, Bzipi and Gagra regions. From the ethnic point of view, Abkhazia was one of the most diversified territories. Later on the correspondent of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” Z. Edili will write: “I don’t think there is a part of the Caucasus such variegated as Abkhazia is today. From this point of view it is pure

mosaic. All the world and his wife came and settled here, Russian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Estonian, Ukrainian, German...” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #8).

How many Abkhazians and Georgians lived in Sokhumi region in the beginning of the XX century? According to the book “Белая книга Абхазии” (“White book of Abkhazia”) published in Moscow by Russian scientists in 1993, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till 1926 number of population of Abkhazia varied between 58 and 55 thousand, and number of the ethnic Georgians increased from 25 to 67 thousand. (Белая книга Абхазии; Moscow 1993; p. 30).

Georgian researchers strongly disagree with this data. According to them, Russian government (first monarchic and later communist) artificially heightened the number of ethnic Abkhazians. The heightened number was received at the expense of the census of Samurzakano populated with ethnic Georgians “as ethnic Abkhazians”. (Totadze Anzor; Tb.; 1995).

Confession of faith of Abkhazian population is also interesting. According to the student of religion Nugzar Papuashvili, “after division of the united kingdom of Georgia (1490-1495) canonical ecclesiastical system (i.e. orthodoxy M.M.) in Abkhazia, as well as in other outlying parts of Georgia, was shaken. For the most part it was replaced by non-canonical faith and beliefs, to be more precise, strange religion, local paganistic (rural) cult service (heathenism); Islam also was disseminated. So, till establishment of colonial regime of tsarist Russia in this region (in Abkhazia) religious chaos reigned there”. (Papuashvili N.; Tb. 2005; p. 49).

According to the research of the demographer Anzor Totadze, in Abkhazia of the beginning of the XX century “89,5% of the population were the Orthodox Christians, 3,1% - Gregorians, and 7% - Moslems” (Totadze Anzor; 1995; p. 87).

In the beginning of the XX century the researcher Davit Chitaia in his characterization of social and economic condition of Abkhazia mentions: “In the beginning of the XX century Abkhazia was economically backward agrarian region, where both agriculture and industry were less-developed”. (Chitaia D.; 2006; p. 52). According to the researcher Jemal Gamakharia, nobility as a title in Abkhazia had great ascendancy over all other titles, including peasantry.

One part of Abkhazian peasantry remained faithful to the nobility till the end and refused to take part in the social struggle, when the second part turned into “Bolshevists”. “One thing is indubitable, social conflict in Abkhazia grew into the conflict between nations due to specific economic relations here”, says Jemal Gamakharia. (Gamakharia J.; 1991; p.p. 21-22).

In that period Abkhazia went through very difficult political situation. Historians single out in Abkhazia four external political players of the first twenty years of the XX century: **1. Mountain Dwellers Union; 2. Turkey; 3. Monarchist movement of Russia, the so-called White Guards; 4. Bolshevik Russia.**

**2. Anti-Georgian movement and separatism in Abkhazia seen by eyes of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”.** The most illustrative example of the above-said process was persecution of the Georgian language. The Georgian language was persecuted in social group, and even in working class; Georgian was oppressed in all schools and Orthodox Churches of Abkhazia.

The most aggressive force of fighting against the Georgian language (and against everything Georgian) was the group of clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church, which used spreading of the Orthodoxy in Abkhazia as a method of pursuing Russian public policy and Russification of this region. The bishop Arseni (Izotov), deacons – Vostorgov and Yastrebov were notable for their hatred towards Georgians (Papuashvili N.; Tb. 2005; p. 162-164). Their tradition of struggle against the Georgian language, and generally, against Georgian culture finally has firmly established in Abkhazia.

For example, in the issue #42 of “Sakartvelo” of 1916, on the news page we read that “the Society of the Spreading Literacy Among Georgians” has its own teacher of the Georgian language in the parish school of the village Gali (Samurzakano). Heretofore the Georgian language was taught on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lessons; and now the bishop of Sokhumi ordered to the eparchy council to assign for Georgian only the 6<sup>th</sup> lesson and the council has already carried out the order” (Sakartvelo”; 1916; #42).

In 1917, when the tsarist Russia was thrown down and full play was given to the national aspirations, in almost all parts of Georgia it was requested to carry out the study process in the Georgian language. But in Abkhazia on the contrary – parents threatened teachers to take their children out of school if they conduct lessons in Georgian.

Zakaria Edili explained the reason of this phenomenon as follows: “As a matter of fact, Russian atmosphere is deeply rooted in Abkhazia and one-century long exercises of Russians for their degeneration did not pass without leaving a trace”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #269).

Should Abkhazians have their own written language? In the newspaper “Sakartvelo” we almost have not found any publication giving either affirmative or negative answer to this question. Though, owing to two circumstances we think that the editorial staff had affirmative answer to that question.

**The first and the most essential circumstance** concerned the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Ambrosi Khelaia. He was elected to the patriarchate in 1921, i.e. after Sovietisation and closure of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”. In 1916-1918, i.e. during the period of his cooperation with the newspaper, St. Ambrosi first was Archimandrite, and then Metropolitan (1917), and from 1917 he was Bishop of Chkondidi.

Ambrosi Khelaia, as an excellent connoisseur of Georgian-Abkhazian relations, was supporter of preservation of the Abkhazian language and of creation of written language for them. Though, he has not given his view on than in “Sakartvelo”, but in his polemic letter “Because of article “Voice from Abkhazia” cited many times by us, he writes that historically Georgian clergymen tried to translate the Orthodox literature into Abkhazian. As a proof he cited a fragment from reports of the Bishop of Imereti Gabriel on his missionary activity in Abkhazia, sent by Gabriel to “the society reviving Orthodox religion in the Caucasus”.

From reports we learn that in 1868 the Bishop Gabriel met with Kesaria Shervashidze (descendant of Dadiani) and as to “an excellent expert of the Abkhazian language and skilful person” offered him to appoint a committee and to translate into Abkhazian “the book of

prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments and, as far as it possible, the Liturgy and the Easter Gospel”<sup>1</sup>.

Intention of the Bishop Gabriel to revive the Abkhazian language in Christian literature is considered by the Archimandrite Ambrosi as exemplary. He considered this fact as a proof that Georgian clergymen “were not poisoned with extreme “Kartvelomanism” (love to Georgian) and hatred to Abkhazia”.

**The second** circumstance is the one detailed news-like publication. From that article we learn that the representative of the National Committee of Georgians of Sokhumi, Niko Tavdgiridze also defended the necessity to survive the Abkhazian language. “All the controversy between Abkhazians and Georgian is caused by the fact that our enemy made Abkhazians believe that we want their degradation, want to destroy their language. We must prove that we respect native language of each nation. With this view it is better to set up a department of the Abkhazian language in the Georgian University”, said N. Tavdgiridze (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #130).

Thus, the values popularized by the editorial staff and, above all, the authority of those covering the issue of Abkhazia make us think that saving of the Abkhazian language, its history and culture was very important issue for the newspaper.

The Orthodox Church became another arena for anti-Georgian movement and separatism in Abkhazia. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century **Georgian and Russian clergymen confronted each other in the Orthodox Church of Abkhazia. The first power fought for integration of Abkhazia into united Georgian space (though not through Georgification of Abkhazians, but through preserving of their national identity); and the second one – for merger of Abkhazian church with Russian, which would result in Russification of the region.**

This process was also covered by the newspaper “Sakartvelo”. In 1918, in the issue #37 the newspaper published an article under the headline “From the history of Russification of the Abkhazian Church”. The article relies on the archival material, namely on the correspondence between the head of Kutaisi gendarmerie and the Bishop of Abkhazia. The chief policeman of Kutaisi demanded detailed information on the following persons: Tedo

Sakhokia, Antimoz Jugheli, priests - Machavariani, Chkhenkeli, Kereselidze and Besarion Khelaia.

Were the above mentioned persons “dangerous or not?”, on this the Bishop wrote to the head of gendarmerie: “If the priests: Machavariani, Chkhenkeli, Kereselidze and Khelaia tried to Georgify Abkhazia and Samurzakano, then, of course, their activity should be seen as harmful, as by doing so they will interfere with goal and aspiration of the Russian Empire... Actions of Tedo Sakhokia and Jugheli should be seen as harmful, as Georgified by them young people will even more oppose Russian church, which acts in Georgia for absolutely different purpose”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #37).

The newspaper “Sakartvelo” has published the said material without journalistic comment. The editorial staff completely entrusted assessment of facts proved by archival documents to the reader.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century among the Orthodox population of Abkhazia appeared a group, which considered the Orthodox Church of Abkhazia as a part of the United Russian Orthodox Church. After victory of Bolsheviks in Russia they demanded autocephaly of Abkhazia. They grounded they demand as follows: “...If we join Georgian church, then in case the autonomy of Georgia is declared we will be placed in it and as in ours there are many estates, Georgians will come and settle here... They [Georgians] will send here priests, the clergy and this is not desirable for us” (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #269).

About those who so desired autocephaly of Abkhazian church Zakaria Edeli writes: “Young Abkhazian clergymen are grown up by Russifiers. Russifiers have been schooled in hatred towards Georgians and, as residents of Sokhumi told me, there is nothing to wait from them, but treachery” (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #128).

Autocephaly of Abkhazian Orthodox Church has never happened. In 1918 the Archimandrite Ambrosi Chkondideli was raised to the Bishop, in 1919 Tskhum-Abkhazeti eparchy also joined his eparchy. The reason as to what urged the clergymen and political government of Georgia to take such decision is covered in the issue #198 of 1919 of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”.

The correspondent of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” witnessed the following fact: “The other day the government of Abkhazia celebrated the Front Day. On the festive agenda was also holding of thanksgiving service in the church. When the army approached the church, Russian priests closed the door before them and refused to hold a prayer service.” (“Sakartvelo”; 1919; #198). “That is why the Government of Abkhazia decreed to prohibit in Abkhazia Russian service. Episcopacy of Tskhumi will probably join Samurzakano and ecclesiastical authority of the Metropolitan Chkondideli, Ambrosi Khelaia, who knows well the Abkhazian, Mingrelian and Georgian languages will apply to Sokhumi”, wrote the correspondent. So it happened.

We think that one interesting trait will be added to the portrait of the Catholicos-Patriarch if we will give the full quotation from one of his sermons he preached in 1918. This sermon he gave in Sokhumi, after memorial service for the repose of the soul of Giorgi Shervashidze - the descendant of the last head of Abkhazians. It is preserved on the pages of “Sakartvelo”.

“Neither before... when our church was the arbiter of its own destiny, it has pursued, nor, of course, now it pursues the policy of ecclesiastic absorption of smaller languages. On the contrary, it always supported nationalization of other church members. The best representatives of the Georgian Church did so even when the synodal policy destroying our people terribly raged here.

As an illustrative example it is enough to recall St. Bishop Gabriel, who believed that the best way to establish Christianity among Abkhazians is to initiate learning of the Abkhazian language in seminary. The second Georgian ecclesiastic figure, now deceased Catholicos Kirion during his stay in Sokhumi did many useful for Abkhazian nation. By the way, he laid the foundation of translation of the Holy Scripture and liturgical books into the Abkhazian language.

Abkhazians and Georgians shall unite so that each of the nations preserves its ethnic flavor. Exactly just like flowers having different fragrance, although being an element of one bunch of flowers, all together they are one marvelous and beautiful bouquet” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #183).

As a metropolitan, Ambrosi shepherded the church people of Tskhum-Abkhazeti in 1919-1921. The researcher Nugzar Papuashvili writes that in 1919-21 from the ethnic point of view peace reigned in Abkhazian church; at least it seems so. He thinks that this circumstance was the result of correct and useful work of the Bishop Ambrosi (Papuashvili N.; 2005; p. 32).

The newspaper “Sakartvelo” covered anti-Georgian processes in Abkhazia **against the background of attempts of hostilities and political revolution** in the region. Disturbances in Abkhazia were caused by three powerful external forces – Turkey, White Guard Russia and Bolshevist Russia. The first two – Turkey and White Guard Russia, in the person of Abkhazian separatists had reliable support.

**Mountain Dwellers Union of the Caucasus.** One of the attempts of separation of Abkhazia from Georgia was at the first public congress of Abkhazia held in Sokhumi in November 1917. The four-clause text of the declaration adopted at the convention was published in the newspaper “Sakartvelo”. The 4<sup>th</sup> clause of this deed is separatistic and defines the goal of separation of Abkhazia from Georgia: “Abkhazian people join the united mountain dwellers union of the North Caucasus, Dagestan, and Abkhazia, and of course, they need close relations with mountain brothers. National council of Abkhazia will be the body, which will unite Abkhazians with Mountain Dwellers Union and will embody political slogans and resolutions of the Union”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #278).

The newspaper “Sakartvelo” left this manifestation of separatism without comment and confined itself just to statement of factual circumstance. To our mind, such approach to coverage of the issue was conditioned by civil liability of the editorial staff; desire not to aggravate Abkhazian-Georgian relations. We suppose that the “silence” of the newspaper was also conditioned by the fact that by that time the journalists of “Sakartvelo” already knew – **Mountain Dwellers Union reckoned with the government of Transcaucasia and despite appeals, would not join Abkhazia.**

News about it was published on the same page of the newspaper, where the declaration of the National Council of Abkhazia has been placed. In particular, according to the Mountain Dwellers Union, they would reckon desire of Abkhazian people just by authority of the Transcaucasia government (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #278). So it really

happened. “State authority of the Mountain Dwellers Union did not apply to Sokhumi region. The authority of this Union confined itself just to “national, cultural and political competence” on Abkhazia” (Janelidze O. 2009; p.124).

**Turkey and Abkhazian separatism.** In April-May of 1918 the Red Bolshevik Army invaded Sokhumi. The fact of their invasion was used by Abkhazian separatists for their own purposes, who appealed to the Turkish regular army for help. Turkish landing force landed in Abkhazia. That is why the General Valiko Jugheli send by the government of Transcaucasusl to Abkhazia had to fight with Bolsheviks with one hand, and with Turkish landing force – with the second hand.

Because of illegal landing in Abkhazia of the Turkish landing force the Georgian government entered a protest to Turkey (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #126) and to its political ally – Germany, the military units of which were in the Transcaucasia at that time. “Representatives of Germany promised [to the Government of Georgia] to arrange with Ottoman government on it”, wrote “Sakartvelo” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #128). From “Sakartvelo” we also learn that the Turkish landing troops left Abkhazia exactly by request of Germans. “General von Kress declared to Ottomans that the stem they have made absolutely contravened international agreements and liability Germany have undertaken against Georgia”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #128).

On 9 August 1918 the Turkish landing force this time landed on the family estate of Abkhazian nobleman T. Marshania and started mobilization of Abkhazian and local Turkish planters against Georgian government (Gabedava M.; 1993; p.24). Few days later near the New Athos conflict between military units of Turkey and Georgia took place. Concerning that the newspaper “Sakartvelo” published notification of the leader of Georgian Guard: “On August 18, at the New Athos Monastery the unit of the Georgian Guard was attacked by the united 1000-men detachment of Ottomans and Abkhazians. Ours won, although lost 55 guardians”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #170). On the same day of the battle, at 9 o’clock in the morning, when the meeting of the National Council of Abkhazia was to open, opposition led by V. A. Sharvashidze and his supporters with armed forces surrounded the building of the National Council” (Gabedava M.; 1993; p.24). That fact, i.e. an attempt of the first political revolution in Abkhazia has not been covered by the newspaper “Sakartvelo”.

**Volunteer army of Denikin.** After failure of the attempt of political revolution with the help of Turkey, the group of separatists wended their way to the strengthened by that time White Guard Russia. Abkhazian delegation led by A.G. Shervashidze met with White Guard General Alekseev in 1918 in Sochi. Members of the delegation asked General “to free Abkhazia from Georgian armed forces...” General Alekseev used this request as an opportunity to restitute the lost lands (meant Sochi and Gagra. M.M.) to Russia (Chitaia D.; 2006; p.244).

Issues of “Sakartvelo” in 1919 are full with materials on the current armed conflicts between the White Guards and military units of the Republic of Georgia. The newspaper has published a telephone message (through direct line) of the representative of the Georgian government in Sochi Mikha Khocholava. According to the message, the volunteer army took Georgian General Koniahsvili, Colonels Tsereteli and Petriev prisoners. At dawn of 24 January the volunteer army attacked Sochi.

The White Guardians freed Georgian soldiers, but the General of Tuapse detachment Burnevich answered questions of Koniev with ultimatum: “I’ve received an order of my government to take Sochi region because of brigandage and violation, which reign in the said region. Thus and so, Your Excellency, in order to avoid bloodshed we offer you to surrender the weapon. After surrender of the weapon all Georgian soldiers and officers of administration will be freed and can go to Georgia”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1919; #30).

The foreign minister of Georgia Evgeni Gegechkori communicated this fact to the representative of England. The newspaper “Sakartvelo” has published the full text of the protest note to England: “The Government of the Republic of Georgia entrusted me to enter the firm protest to Your Excellency against such actions of the volunteer army and to declare that the Government of Georgia according to the principle of interference will take all measures to defend in arms its interests and will protect its territorial inviolability and rights and interests of its people”, wrote the foreign minister of Georgia (“Sakartvelo”; 1919; #32).

Despite the protest note and demand of representatives of England Denikin’s volunteer army did not cease hostilities. One by one they took Sochi and Gagra. One of the editorial letters of “Sakartvelo” criticizes the policy of the Great Britain in the Caucasus.

“How can any of Caucasian nations have respect towards the Great Britain, if even Denikin’s voluntary army set it at defiance?”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1919; #31).

Struggle of the White Guards against Georgian ended in taking Gagra.

**Bolshevist Russian in Abkhazia.** The first Bolshevist action took place in Sokhumi, in February 1918. On 15 February 1918 the cruiser “Dakia” of the military squadron the Russian Black Sea Front sailed in the Sokhumi port. On February 16 one of the sailors insulted Lieutenant N. Emkhvar, who did not forgive the sailor and killed him. The sailors made a range of demands to the governor of the town. The most important among them was setting up of military-revolutionary committee. The government had to satisfy these demands. The cruiser “Dakia” was replaced by battleship “Derzki”. Population of Dranda took Emkhvar and his foster brother prisoners and handed them over to the crew of “Derzki”. Russian sailors killed Abkhazians alive.

The newspaper “Sakartvelo” has published the telegram of the Menshevik Benia Chkhikvishvili appointed a head of Sokhumi: “The situation is close to despair, they do not obey us and treat us hostilely. Mingrelians of Dranda and Abkhazians, who have good relations with us, are despaired because of the situation and possibly they will ask Ottoman landing forces to establish order if we do not take proper measures at due time...” (“Sakartvelo”; 198; #44).

Two month later the situation tensed again. First began Bolshevists actions in Gagra, where small group of people set up an executive committee and declared in Gagra establishment of the Soviet power. According to information provided by a correspondent of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”, Bolsheviks strengthened with support of Mingrelians and Armenians attacked Sokhumi, took it and imposed the city contribution of 2 million rubles” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #70).

The army led by General Valiko Jugheli and Colonel Koniahsvili sent by Transcaucasia Seim managed to help them. In “Sakartvelo” was published the abstract of the report the General Valiko Jugheli made on May 29, 1918 before the executive committee of the National Council of already independent Georgia. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #106).

The third Bolsheviks attack of Abkhazia took place in June 1918. “Georgian military units led by General G. Mazniashvili were redeployed to Sokhumi. Georgian armed forces defeated Bolshevik units of Sochi, which secured the rear of Abkhazian Bolsheviks. They were forced to retreat and leave Gagra. “Sakartvelo” wrote: “The aim of General Mazniashvili’s army is to mop up Sokhumi region from Bolsheviks at short notice and to make unreliable element to throw down their arms, which is met by the most of Abkhazians with great sympathy”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #126).

Mazniashvili not only freed Sokhumi, but he also took Gagra, Sochi and Tuapse. These short success of Georgian army aroused hope in correspondent of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”: “If the Black Sea province was annexed to Georgia, artificially erected fencing will be demolished and environs of Sokhi and Tuapse will be Georgified in several years. This in the end will also appease Samegrelo, which suffers great narrowness due to lack of free land”, wrote a correspondent of “Sakartvelo” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #1530).

Joy of “Sakartvelo’s” publicists was premature as we gave up Tuapse about one month later, and Sochi and Gagra were taken one by one by the Russian White Guard volunteer army in 1919.

In 1920 in the Black Sea province revolted peasants. They drove Denikin’s volunteer army out villages – Khosta, Plastunka, Adler. By March the whole Black Sea province found itself under the authority of Bolshevik organizations. The newspaper covered these actions mainly as news stories.

The last attack of Abkhazia by Bolsheviks was in February 1921. The attack of the 9<sup>th</sup> Russian army in direction of Gagra-Sokhumi began on February 19. The same day the newspaper “Sakartvelo” published correspondence “In Abkhazia”. According to the author, the general congress of members of the National Democratic Party assembled in Sokhumi.

“The government’s appeal on mobilization of forces for defending the country aroused admiration. The congress has resolved: to take all measures in for defending of the country. The volunteers units are formed...The congress is deeply convinced that Georgian people would again defeat the enemy, which has deceitfully assaulted Georgia” (“Sakartvelo”; 1921; #41).

On the following day the newspaper “Sakartvelo” reported just in two sentences that the enemy’s attack of Gagra is stopped (“Sakartvelo” 1921; \$42). Though, this encouraging information had no ground. On February 22 the Soviet army took Gagra, on March 3 – Sokhumi. By that time the newspaper “Sakartvelo” was closed; the Russian flag was flying in the capital.

In 1918 the newspaper “Sakartvelo” depicted three Bolsheviks actions, the fact of four landings of Turkish landing forces, attempts of political revolutions; in 1919 – military confrontation with Denikin’s volunteer army; in 1920 – the peasants revolts in the Black Sea province and defeat of the White Guard Russia; and finally, in 1921 inevitable prospect of Sovietification, as well as Gagra-Sokhumi annexation loomed behind the groundless optimism of the newspaper.

**3. Criticism of the policy of Georgian Menshevik government in Abkhazia.** Correspondent of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” criticized first the policy of Transcaucasia commissariat and the Seim, and then – the policy of the national government of Georgia in Abkhazia. Namely, the **manpower and elections policy** of Menshevik government displeased them. They also believed that Georgian government had to fight more effectively **for retention of Sochi**. Besides, “Sakartvelo” has criticized the issue of **lands distribution** in Abkhazia.

**Manpower and elections policy.** In the opinion of the correspondents of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”, the Menshevik public officers appointed by the Menshevik government of Georgia damaged strategic interests of Georgia in Abkhazia. The author of one of such letters Niko Tavdgiridze criticized acting representative of the Georgian government in Sokhumi Gizo Japaridze. This official caviled at the best soldiers of General Mazniashvili. But the editorial staff considered them as heroes, as they were exactly who moped up Abkhazia from Bolsheviks: “Operations of General Mazniashvili in Sokhumi region and the Black Sea province re-established the prestige of Georgian arms, which undermined in Batumi region. And this has great importance from strengthening of the national self-consciousness. Even greater importance has it for foreigners, who still are not sure if we can build the state with our own power”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #153).

Gizo Anjaparidze came to hate Georgian officers Iashvili, Chkadua and Dundua. Jaaridze even abused them during the binge in a hotel: “Do you know who I am! I can make you miserable and demote you to soldiers”. Moreover, Anjaparidze even made Dundua arrested (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #186).

The author of the article provided the reader also with other facts of Anjaparidze’s work in Abkhazia. For example, how Anjaparidze brought back to Sokhumi two Bolsheviks, whom General Mazniashvili has banished from Abkhazia for antistate activities. (Provided to be, he gave the Bolshevik units banished from Abkhazia 2 millions of the state money). “Our government must show more wariness and prudence when sending special attorneys to outlying districts”, wrote Tavdginidze (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #186).

In addition to this article the publicists of “Sakartvelo” criticized the government’s mistake, because of which was detained the respected and, above all, notable for devotion to Georgians, Abkhazian nobleman Dimitry Marshania on charges of complicity in political coup in Abkhazia. As it turned out, his only son was at war in Georgian army and even was badly wounded. First Dimitry Marshania was resettled by Menshevist government to Tbilisi, later on he was found not guilty and sent back to Sokhumi. “Because of such maltreatment all Abkhazians, who would die for us, became our adversaries”, wrote a publicist of the newspaper “Sakartvelo”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #186).

**Election regulations describing rules of elections of the public council in Abkhazia in February 1919 adopted in December 1918 by the National Council of Georgia and the Government of Georgia** was met with criticism by the editorial staff. Regulations approved to non-citizens of Georgia living in Abkhazia, i.e. foreign citizens the right of participation in elections.

Before adoption of the elections regulations correspondent of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” (penname “Rioneli”\*) asked the government of Georgia not to approve this

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\* To our opinion the author of the said article can be Niko Nikoladze, as the penname “Rioneli” is one of his pennames. Besides, though it is devoted to Abkhazians, but in fact it describes confrontation of social and national world-view.

regulations. Do not these respectful people know what such regulations mean? Don't they understand how dangerous such regulations can be for Abkhazia, as well as for territorial integrity of Georgia? Don't they know that today in Abkhazia live 60 thousand Russians and 30 000 Armenian, and most of them are foreign country nationals, and that is why of course they will tend to foreign countries and not to Georgia?

And if they understand that then what does all that mean, then what does such political mistake mean? I think it's time to disperse the political mist, to act in national way and pursue real policy", wrote correspondent of "Sakartvelo" ("Sakartvelo"; 1918; #241).

**Incompatible struggle for Sochi.** According to the position of the editorial staff of "Sakartvelo", the Government of Georgia should have fought **for retention of Sochi** more effectively and should have had claims for this city. When German army in Transcaucasia was replaced by the army of Great Britain, the position of Georgian government was as follows: "Sochi region is taken by Georgian army temporarily, at will of the local population itself and this territory will be returned to Russia when in Russia will be established normal living..." ("Sakartvelo"; 1919; #40).

The journalist of the newspaper "Sakartvelo" did not agree with position of the government of Georgia: "...Sochi region does not belong to Russia. As the last studies proved, not only Sochi, but also Tuapse region was embodied in the state borders of Georgia. Of course, today we won't be able to defend our claims only by charters of Tamar Mepe epoch, but as we know, Republic of Georgia is a successor not just of Bagrations' Georgia, but also of administrative and political unit of Transcaucasia, which always embodied the Black Sea province.

About seventy thousand people live in Sochi region; from here only half are Russians, i.e. thirty-five thousand. Georgian population growth very quickly and no wonder as the district is surrounded by densely populated Georgian provinces and the Old Jiketi by climatic conditions is continuation of Samegrelo and Abkhazia" ("Sakartvelo"; 1919; #40).

**Land reform in Abkhazia.** Declaration of lands to be state ownership is that the most painful subject, which even more sharpened anti-Georgian mood. Menshevist

government of Georgia has issued the land decree and the land was declared state ownership. On this Zakaria Edili writes in “Sakartvelo”: “[Land decree] for Abkhazia was very premature. Those who have seen Abkhazia they would also know that feudal structure in Abkhazia is almost completely preserved till today. That respect, that politeness which was among us 60 years ago, is unchanged in Abkhazia. Till today the work of a nobleman was almost the Holy of Holies for them”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1919; #20).

Despite the fact that the land in Abkhazia has been declared the state ownership, leaseholder Mingrelians **were left without lands as always**. The Government of Georgia did not even consider the issue of their lands, though an opinion appeared that on taken lands should have returned muhajirs exiled to Turkey. About this the newspaper “Sakartvelo” wrote: “Landless and in need of care are our leaseholder peasants. They are factual heirs of nobles’ family estates. But our socialists take away from peasants lands cleaned and enriched with their blood and sweat and give them to muhajirs run away to Tatars. **Our peasants do not understand who their enemy is, and who their friend is. Mensheviks take away lands, but Bolsheviks give.**” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #137) (the line is ours M.M.).

**4. Statistics of publications on Abkhazia, publicists, pennames.** Total number of the published and obtained-processed by us publication on Abkhazia is 218. Great part from here is taken by news items.

Problems of Abkhazia have been more intensively covered by Zakaria Edili and Niko Tavdgiridze. Although, interested analytical articles have been issued by Spiridon Kedia, Grigol Veshapeli, Archimandrite Ambrosi Khelaia. Several literary-publicistic feature stories belong to the pen of Grigol Robakidze.

Listed by us pennames of journalist working on Abkhazia issues are: **Am-Beri**; Galius; Glekhishvili; I-Le-Baghatureli; Ilorel; In-Ri; Irakli; Kai; Megobari; **Rioneli**; Sali; S.P.; Chakhraki; Juansher; **I.J.**; **Javakhi**.

Majority of pennames are unknown. We know only that the penname **Am-Beri** belongs to Ambrosi Khelaia. (Papuashvili N.; Tb. 2005; p. 42).

As to pennames – **I. J. and Javakhi** – we suppose that they belong to the publicist of “Sakartvelo” Iason Javakhishvili, who issued several articles on Abkhazia under his name and surname as well.

Another penname **Rioneli**, presumably belongs to Niko Nikoladze. In the first place, the said penname belong to a number of the so-called decoded pennames, and in the second, due to writing style and convincingness of arguments we think that behind the penname “Rioneli of the author of the said article may hide Niko Nikoladze.

## **II Samachablo**

The chapter devoted to Samachablo consists of three subchapters. The first subchapter describes **Samachablo in the first twenty years of the XX century**; the second deals with publications in which the newspaper “Sakartvelo” covered **separatism in Samachablo**, and in the third subchapter is given **statistics** of publications on Samachablo, and **surnames and pennames of publicists** working on that subject.

**1. Samachablo in the first twenty years of the XX century.** The territory of old Samachablo, now called separatist republic of the South Ossetia “is bounded from the North Ossetia by the state and at the same time by the natural border – the main watershed mountain ridge of Caucasus Mountains”. (Historic and political-legal aspects of Georgian-Ossetian conflict and general plans of their settlement; 1992; p. 3).

Georgian and some Ossetian historians (G. Togoshvili, V. Abaev) agreed that Ossetians began to resettle from the North Ossetia to Shidan Kartli on the estates of Machabeli, Argvisi and Ksani Eristavs in XVII-XVIII centuries. “Ossetians settled in Georgia till 1922 have never had any ethnopolitical, or ethnoterritorial unit, they represented nation minority in Georgia”, - such is assessment of one group of Georgian historians (Historic and political-legal aspects of Georgian-Ossetian conflict and general plans of their settlement; 1992; p. 3).

Expression of the Ossetians separatism began right after formation of independent Republic of Georgia. Samachablo turned into a territory embodying the real danger for young Republic of Georgia. In 1918-20 in the South Ossetia there were three riots in order to throw down the government of the Republic of Georgia.

The correspondent of the newspaper “Sakartvelo” Zakaria Edili in the cycle of his travel correspondence “Ossetians of Georgia” wrote: “Ossetians collected one and a half million and began to lay new road, which would connect them with the North Ossetia. That road will go along Kekhvi to Liakhvi ravine, will pass the core of Georgian Ossetia, villages Gufia, Java, Khtse, Vanili, Roki, here will get across the mountain range, go down to village Zakishi and then Alagiri. This road connects both Ossetias, Ameri and Imeri. Thus, will unite and become the one whole Ossetia torn apart by the mountain range...and for us this road will have crucial importance (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #207).

After revolution in February 1917 Ossetians preferred trading with the North Caucasus to trading with Tbilisi, and brought from there deficient product – powder, sugar and kerosene. They sold these goods for Georgians too, but categorically demanded Russian money, which was deficiency in independent Georgia.

“Such unfriendly disposition of Ossetians to Georgians is exactly the same as the attitude of poor to rich, of landless to landowner, etc. Though Georgian peasant has nothing on Ossetian peasant, but in comparison with him lives in more opulence, has more lands and this is the reason of envy to Georgian...Today Ossetians twist around Kartli like a hoop and are penetrated into its core. Kartli is in terrible danger and our government must timely pay attention to this issue and to give Ossetians any other place to settle so that Ossetians would not tear the whole Kartli into two and by doing that not to endanger Georgia”, wrote Zakaria Edili. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #207).

Journalistic materials on Samachablo published in the newspaper “Sakartvelo” confirm that in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century among ethnic Ossetians was widely spread robbery, brigandage, assault, beating of people, kidnapping and killing. According to journalistic materials, historical Shida Kartli stands out as certain enclave, territory under the

control of criminals, the control of which afterwards could take neither government of Transcaucasia nor government of Georgia.

According to the researcher Avtandl Songulashvili, criminogenic situation especially aggravated after the end of the First World War. “They formed armed detachments mainly consisting of 300 Ossetians and under the pretext of “establishing order” assaulted countrymen families, and Georgians in general and robbed them. This fact is admitted even by the first session of the National Council of Ossetia held on 3-4 March of 1918’.

9songulashvili A.; 2009; p. 138).

From the ethnical point of view Samachablo was one of heterogeneous parts, although, in contrast to Abkhazia the share of Georgians here was greater. From data obtained by the demographer Anzor Totadze it is seen that in 1922 in Tskhinvali Ossetians took one of the last places according to quantity. The first place was taken by Jews (1651 men); the second – by Georgians (1436), the third – by Armenians (765). And Ossetians were on the fourth place (613). (Totadze A.; 2006; p. 34).

In multinational Samachablo (as in big, as well as in small Liakhvi ravines) lived society being at the initial stage of development of capitalism. The upper part lived according to more traditional, customs characteristic for feudalistic society late adopted the progress characteristic for capitalistic society.

“In the middle of the ravine strengthening of Armenian traders is especially noticeable, who began to settle down in the mountain population by opening one or two dukhans. The same processes are in process in social and economic structure of Liakhvi ravine, where activity of Armenian traders was replaced by the quite competitive Jewish population increased in Tskhinvali region, and knowing well everyday habits and customs of the population, perfectly well fitted their trading flexibility and provided with small products according to demands. The said process was spreading according to development of capitalism in countryside. Small stalls and workshops replace the so-called “trade with small articles”, where mainly worked Jews”. (Pavliashvili D.; 1998; pp. 18-19).

Thus, social and economic life of Samachablo of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was characteristic with the same trends as was the entire Georgia. This was region on the initial stage of capitalism notable for ethnic and religious diversity.

**2. Separatism in Samachablo.** Ossetian peasants first rose in armed rebellion in Samachablo even in the period of South Caucasian Seim i.e. in March 1918. The population returned from the front of World War I did have weapons but had no living conditions. This kind of situation was appropriate ground for rebellion. Russia made effective use of hard social conditions and weak state control and in March 1918, rebellion began in Samachablo.

The newspaper “Sakartvelo” announced about this rebellion by means of Gogua, assistant to the Head of Gori district. According to him, Giorgi Machabeli, the head of Gori district dared to enter the rebel Tskhinvali without waiting for the assistance. He was accompanied by 400 guardians of South Caucasian army. The rebel Ossetians demanded from Machabeli to transfer 4 arrested Ossetians to them. They promised to hold trial themselves. When their demand was refused, they began to fire at the army. 4 persons died straightaway. Negotiations turned out to be unsuccessful...

“Machabeli and Kosta Kozashvili were killed. Gagloevi, Sandro Ketskhoveli, Kapanadze, Arjevanidze and others were wanted. We have no hope for their survival. “Ossetians say that they will expel Georgians and give their places to Ossetians. Numerous Ossetians have arrived in Tskhinvali. Currently, the 300 men strong regiment of Ossetians is lodged in Gori. They say that even more people arrive from Tskhinvali for reinforcement of regiment”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #64).

The details about the rebellion were published in newspaper “Sakhalkho Sakme” which was copied by “Sakartvelo” without any contraction. According to the author, March 16 was the date of beginning the tension in Shida Kartli. On that date the delegation of Ossetians visited Tskhinvali and demanded from local representatives of Menshevik government to expel the Mensheviks and nobles from Gori and to distribute the plots of lands to Ossetians.

Giorgi Machabeli, head of Gori district promised the rebels to meet all the made demands except expelling the nobles from Gori district. The rebels demanded that Machabeli should make public announcement about it at specially arranged meeting. On March 18, the meeting was really hold in Dvrisi square and the local administration made the above mentioned promise to rebel Ossetians. Kumulgarov, commissar of Tskhinvali delivered a speech at the meeting. He called Ossetians for insisting on immediate meeting of their demands.

According to the correspondent, Kumulgarov declared: "... Patience is enough. He raised his hands and this sign firing began from two directions – from Zghudris Kari and from Natsargori. The horrified people crawled on their bellies away from the square" ("Sakartvelo"; 1918; #70). This was the beginning of 5 years long disorder in Tskhinvali. The rebels raided the barrel houses, shops. The army of South Caucasian government was fired with grenades from rifle.

"In some places Giorgi Machabeli, Kosta Kazashvili, Ilia Maisuradze and others handled with the mob. The wire from Gori to Tskhinvali turned out to be cut beforehand and the rescue army was not expected to help. The machine gun seemed to be placed near the bridge. Giorgi Machabeli was wounded there and then killed in front of the hospital. Kosta Kazashvili fell victim to performing his duties in the same place. Sandro Ketskhoveli was standing on the bridge when he was killed. The mob mutilated his body beyond recognition." ("Sakartvelo"; 1918; #70).

Tskhinvalians ran away and the rebels plundered their ownership. "They seem to have command in Tskhinvali till the midday on March 22. Then they learned that the army had started from Gori and cowardly left the town." Kumulgarov, the rebel commissar of Tskhinvali was arrested by South Caucasian army.

There was no toll in peaceful population of Tskhinvali. Only two aged persons and Shakro Machabeli, a famous inhabitant of Kartli, were killed. "They say that he was killed because he did not abandon the body of his dead nephew, Giorgi Machabeli", reported the newspaper ("Sakartvelo"; 1918; #70).

Shalva Amirejibi, a distinguished member of National Democratic Party, poet, publicist, participant of rebellion of 1924, dedicated a comprehensive letter to Ossetian rebellion of March 1918. His letter, “Front of Tskhinvali” presents criticism of Menshevik, Socialist politics. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #64).

“Tragedy of Georgian democracy is the fact that while it is still grounded on social reforms and democracy, the other Caucasian nations lead the national policy... Politics of seizure is a slogan nowadays and Ossetians clearly declared – “Tskhinvali is ours and mountainous part of Georgia is Ossetia...

There is no more Georgian place in Georgia as the one where today Ossetians are settled. It is Georgia’s back, its backbone... People who say that nowadays Georgians do not live in that territory as it is not a part of Georgia should also justify the uselessness of backbone for the body as it does not have eyes, ears or heart on it”. “Sakartvelo”; 1918; #64).

Shalva Amirejibi wrote one more letter, which is dedicated to Giorgi Machabeli, the killed head of Gori district. It seems that the author knew him since childhood. Because of that he recalls him as his friend and a person who is not spoken about in superlative. Shalva Amirejibi wrote: “He was fat since childhood... he had a tender soul and played the flute even since childhood.” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #69).

Shalva Amirejibi recalls that he saw G. Machabeli last going to offices of different Ministers asking them money for buying weapons for Guardians. “They say that dying he said the last words: “Why are you killing me here? I wanted to die at at the Ottoman border.” Poor fellow! Perhaps he died believing that unity of Georgia is still possible and the front of Tskhinvali is not a foreign front. Maybe it is true, maybe Ossetians are not betrayers and it is still possible to have fraternal union with them”, wrote Sh. Amirejibi (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #69)

By the end of March 1918, South Caucasian army, having General Valiko Jugheli as a leader, raided the rebels. “Sakartvelo” published Colonel Koniashvili’s telegram, which read: “Gori. 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. To the Government of South Caucasia. I joined the army of

Jugheli. We have invaded Tkhinvali and adjacent territories. We will inform about the future actions”. (“Sakartveli”; 1918; #68).

However, there was no salvation for those who died during the rebellion. Because of its form of document and a style of announcement, one more news, published in the same issue of “Sakartvelo”, was really horrifying:

“...5 soldiers were killed and 3 soldiers were wounded in village Tamaresheni, close to Tskhinvali. They were relieving the captives but the rebels were backing away to the mountains, taking the captives with them. At 6 o’clock they brought dead bodies of Machabeli, Ketskhoveli and others. The bodies were mutilated beyond recognition”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #66).

The Ossetian rebellion of March 1918 was followed by Bolshevik rebellion in Dusheti district. The forces of Northern Ossetia played significant role in this rebellion. However, we will not consider the details of Dusheti rebellion as far as it was not definitely the uprising organized by one national minority – Ossetians. We believe that this was the riot inspired by Bolsheviks on the basis of social problems and Georgian population also participated in it.

After declaring the independence of Georgia, the representatives of Menshevik government visited Ossetians living in Samachablo. The informational note, published in number 110 of “Sakartvelo” in 1918, reads: “On June 4, the meeting of Ossetians was held in village Java and Mensheviks (I. Ramishvili), Bolsheviks (P. Makharadze) and representative of South Caucasia participated in it... Menshevik Is. Ramishvili mentioned declaration of independence of Georgia and said that hopefully Ossetians would not follow the revolutionists and would support the young Democratic Republic of Georgia” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #110).

The publication also informs that M. Zoriev, representative of National Council of North Caucasian Ossetians made a speech at the meeting. According to him, North Caucasia was in danger from Bolsheviks. He hoped that **“Southern Ossetians would support Northern Ossetians”** (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #110), (the line is ours. M.M).

The next meeting of Ossetians in 1918 was held in village Tsunari. Irakli Tsereteli, the famous member of Menshevik government attended the meeting. “Sakartvelo” did not publish any information about the meeting, however, the editorial letter, authored by Geronti Kikodze, makes it clear that “annexation of Ossetia to Georgia” did not occur and thus the aims of Irakli Tsereteli were not achieved. The author made this kind of conclusion after reading the article about the meeting of Ossetians, published in Russian Menshevik newspaper “Borba”.

“Resolution submitted by Irakli Tsereteli was refused by majority of votes against three. Instead, the resolution submitted by social revolutionists was accepted. According to the latter one, the issue of Ossetians’ self-determination should be solved at the next meeting to be held in 6 weeks. The issue was to be agreed between the South Ossetia and North Ossetia and they should ask the Republic of Georgia to keep the issue open while working out the constitution”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #124).

Geronti Kikodze was resentful over the fact that ethnic Ossetians living in Samachablo needed some time to think about the way of becoming the part of democratic Republic of Georgia. Maybe they would not decide to form a part of Republic of Georgia altogether. Kikodze believed that Samachablo was historic Georgia. Moreover, it was a center of Georgia and the autonomy of this territory was a political deformation. “Our state sovereignty expands to the whole historic territory of ours. Ossetians living in Java gorge are also included in this territory like the Abkhazians of Sukhumi district, Tatars of Borchalo district or the other people of Georgia...” (საქართველოს ოლქის ჭრელ-დუხელები) wrote Geronti Kikodze. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #124)

It is worth mentioning that Geronti Kikodze did not blame the Ossetians. His letters were targeted at “Bolsheviks from Java and Social Revolutionists” who consciously or unconsciously were implementing the Russian imperialist politics in Georgia. “These elements (he means Bolsheviks and socialist revolutionaries, M. M) play the role of state offenders and they should be punished... If 200 problematic nobles are worth of hanging or shooting for problematic crime, why the state traitors should be granted with flowers of rhetoric?” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #124)

Thereby, “Sakartvelo” described the chaos and disorder which occurred in Samachablo at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The weak central government could not cover the whole region in terms of political administration. Because of that, the situation became even more complicated. This kind of environment was quite favorable ground for Ossetian separatism inspired mainly by Bolshevik forces.

**3. Statistics, publicists, pseudonyms.** In “Sakartvelo” we found 112 publications about Samachablo in total. Most of them are informational. As for the analytical articles, they were published in the newspaper from time to time. However, unlike the issues of Abkhazia, the problems of Samachablo were reported mainly by not so famous journalists, who, we believe, were the local inhabitants. Alexander Levanishvili, Iason Javakhishvili, Alexander Machabeli were the most distinguished of them.

The most remarkable letters about Samachablo are the publications by Shalva Amirejibi and Geronti Kikodze. The article “Ossetians of Georgia (The Traveler’s Impressions)” is also worth mentioning. The author of this article is Z. Edyl. It was published in #203 and #207 issues of “Sakartvelo” in 1918. The author of interesting feature “Some things by traveler” is Apollon Tsuladze, Journalist (actually he had major in agricultural science). The articles about the second Ossetian rebellion in Sachkhere by Leli Japaridze and David Kasradze, are also worth mentioning.

**Pen names.** Often, the authors of works published about Samachablo used pen names. While working on theme, we recorded the following pen names: Soso; Supporter; Solomon; **Legatus**; Tsikeli; Khion; **Liakhveli**; Ch. K-dze; Well-wisher; Orphan; V. Leliani; Passer-by; Nickel; Woman from Kartli; Truth; Bagrat Betaneli; Someone Toreli; **A. M-li**; Dav. Gamrekeli; Observer; I. Ji-li; **N.K.** from Mejvriskhevi; Messenger; Tskhinvaleli; **A. L.**; **A-L**; Tiger.

Out of these pen names, we have identified the **Liakhveli**, which belongs to Catholicos -Patriarch Kirion (Sadzaglishvili).

We suppose that the pen name **Al. M-li** belongs to Alexander Machabeli and the pen name **N.K.** belongs to Niko Ketskhoveli (the famous botanist and rector of Tbilisi State University in the future) who published the reports in “Sakartvelo” from time to time. His

travel essays are especially interesting\* ...Our supposition is justified by the article signed by N.K. It is a report from village Tkviavi (see “Sakartvelo”, 1917, #148, “Report/village Tkviavi”; p. 4), which is a home village of Niko Ketskhoveli.

Pen names **A.L.** and **A-L** may belong to Alexander Levanishvili who published a number of reports in “Sakartvelo” in 1919-1920.

Therefore, “Sakartvelo” – the newspaper of 1915-1921 reported on the life of Samachablo. According to the publications, this region was shaped as the hardest region in criminal terms. It was the region which fostered separatism and endangered the democratic Republic of Georgia from time to time.

### **III Saingilo**

The chapter dedicated to Saingilo consists of four subchapters. The first chapter describes the life of Saingilo at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second subchapter, which is the longest one, considers the publications of “Sakartvelo” describing the **social problems of Saingilo**. The third subchapter summarizes the publications dedicated to **religious conflicts in Saingilo**. The fourth subchapter presents **statistical information** about publications published in “Sakartvelo” and information about the **names and pen names of journalists working on this topic**.

**1. Saingilo at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.** Like all the other further regions, Saingilo was also impacted by imperialist policy of Iran and of Russia later. A great number of ethnic Georgians turned Muslims and the Georgian language declined.

Ilia Chkonia, publicist of “Sakartvelo” newspaper wrote: “Decay of Georgia began in the period when the enemies took away the peripheral regions such as Chaneti, Samtskhe, Saatabago and other places called Ottoman Georgia as well as Hereti, one of the part of which is Zaqatala district nowadays...If we want to gain strength again as a nation, we should revive our brotherly national union” (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #120)

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\* E.g., In 1917, Niko Ketskhoveli published a series of letters - travel essays “One month in Meskheti” of in “Sakartvelo” (#266; 267)

According to the data provided by Ilia Chkonia, Saingilo was populated with 46 250 local inhabitants originated from Daghestan; 10 000 Daghestanians and 25 000 other Muslims; 17 000 Georgians (Christians, Muslims); 1500 Armenians; 50 – others. In total, population of Saingilo made 100 000. The dominant language of Saingilo was Tatarian (Azerbaijani, Turkish). Daghestanian was spoken in 22 villages. Out of 22 Georgian villages, only 19 had maintained Georgian language. Mother tongue was thoroughly forgotten in two villages... The population of 16 Daghestanian villages also managed to speak some Georgian (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #120).

Lots of Ingilos “became Daghestanian”. According to the publicist of “Sakartvelo”, this process was preconditioned by different reasons. Some of the Ingilos were inspired by Social-Democratic principles, the others tried to avoid military service. Certain of them did not believe in their Georgian origins.

Information about Saingilo at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is provided by M. Janashvili, reporter of “Sakartvelo”. He states that 14000 Ingilos lived in Zaqatala district (unlike Ilia Chkonia, Janashvili indicates much less number of Ingilos, M.M.)

“... Muslim Ingilos are absolute ignorant... Christian Ingilos are really fond of their mother land, their origins. They tend to develop and achieve success. But Muslim Ingilos strive for degeneration and ultimate difference from Georgians”, wrote Moses Janashvili (“Sakartvelo”, 1917; #125).

Backwardness of Muslim Ingilos was discussed not only by M. Janashvili. Z. Edyl, the other publicist of “Sakartvelo” also mentioned this fact. In 1917 he travelled from Saingilo to Abkhazia and published the essays describing his travel in “Sakartvelo” (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #123).

Upon seeing the Megrelian nice houses, Z. Edyl remembered the life of retarded Ingilos: “How big is the difference between Megrelia and Saingilo... It will be difficult to find even one house which is so nice and tidy in Saingilo. Unconsciously I ask a question to myself: Why, we –Ingilos could not learn from one another? Why could not we follow the others? But please, do not regard Ingilos as poorer than Megrelians... Surely they are not. Just on the contrary, Ingilos are richer

but they lack capacity of improving their life”, wrote Zakaria Edyl. (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #123).

Therefore, Islamism, rather the close relationship with uncivilized North-Caucasian nations led Zaqatala district to unfavorable condition.

**2. Social problems in Saingilo.** Georgian newspaper “Sakartvelo” reported on acute social problems of Saingilo in three directions. The first group of publications described the food shortage; the second group considered the hard criminal conditions and the third group reported on educational issues.

**Food problems.** In 1915 the distress caused by drought and shortage of corn in Western Georgia expanded to Saingilo. It is almost impossible to buy the bread (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; #110); the price of sugar rose up to 70 copecks (till the end of war it reached 3 Rubles), however, it was difficult to get the sugar even at such a price. The government prohibited trade between Saingilo and Daghestan. Because of that, price of the products (tea, sugar, rice), which used to be imported from Daghestan, went up. As for Saingilo, it suffered shortage of sheep and oil (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #137).

Consumers’ associations established in the villages of Qax and Zaqatala did not fulfill their functions. Instead of distributing the products sent to the region by the government at cheaper price, the members of consumers’ associations divided the products among themselves and sold them at much higher prices later (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; # 288).

Monopolization – purchase of products (bread, sugar, vitriol, silk, seeds...) by only one person, as well as prohibition of trade between Daghestan and Saingilo, accelerated the process of illegal trade. The publication in “Sakartvelo”, dedicated to this issue, read: “Trade is totally monopolized by Armenians and Tatar. These two nations, mostly the merchants, have dispute because of some ambiguous reasons and it damages poor population”. Upon familiarizing oneself with the lifestyle in Zaqatala, it becomes obvious why the German newspaper called the merchants of Russian empire “our allies in the rear of Russian army”, wrote the reporter of “Sakartvelo” (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #42).

According to the reporter of “Sakartvelo”, in Zaqatala the bridges over the canals were destroyed, the paved roads were damaged and it was difficult to get out of mud when it was raining. The streets were not lighted any more. Even the last hope faded when the new Head of the town ordered to take down the lamps from the posts. The journalist summarizes the evaluation with the following words “How miserable the town of Zaqatala is” (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #73).

The hard economic and social problems logically led to the deterioration of criminal conditions.

**Hard criminal conditions.** In post revolution period first the law enforcement structures of united Government of South Caucasia and later the similar structures of independent republic of Georgia turned out to be ineffective. Theft and robbery was common in Saingilo. The non-threshed corns were stolen, the houses were burgled in, and the animals were stolen. The people did not dare to go out alone; they walked and traveled in groups. The youth was burnt alive when he recognized the thieves of his buffalo (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #291). The Christian priest, Mikhail Kulashvili was also burnt alive (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #6). Ingilos knew the name of the criminal but did not dare to disclose it as they were afraid.

Z. Edyl returned to Saingilo in 1918. While travelling by Kakhethian train, he witnessed the fact of grabbing sugar, tea and tobacco from Daghestanians by Armenian soldiers and then by the Georgian soldiers as the united state of South Caucasia was defended by triple forces (Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani one). The soldiers did not listen to entreaty of Daghestanians living in Saingilo. They asked them not to take tea from them. As they never drank wine and vodka, the tea was the only drink for them. According to Z. Edyl, Daghestanians were astonished by so cruel treatment from Georgians” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #35)

Zaqatala, administrative center of Saingilo was almost empty. After the murder of two or three Armenian merchants, mostly the Armenian population left the town. The business depression began. Despite the Daghestanians request, the Armenians did not return. The shortage in food increased even more. Even the illegal trade of Armenians became desirable for Saingilo. (“Sakartvelo”).

Despoilment of Christian churches and villages became a common practice. Georgian newspaper “Sakartvelo” reported that the murder of several Christian Ingilos in village was no surprise as they were used to criminal activities. But disgrace of Kurmukhi cathedral was unbelievable arrogance as “One could not imagine the worse abuse for Ingilos”. (“Sakartvelo”); 1918; #98).

The success of Turkey in World War in 1917-1918 encouraged the criminal part of Azerbaijani even more. They used violence obviously wherever they could (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adzharia). They made the local population fulfill their will. How could Ingilos defend themselves? They applied to the government (commissariat of South Caucasia), National Council of Georgia, Catholicos, Sheikh-Ulislam and waited for assistance in vain.

One of the reporters of “Sakartvelo” evaluated the situation in Saingilo after the revolution of February 1917 as follows: “It is impossible to name all the disasters inflicted by Muslims to our brothers – Ingilos in the era of “freedom”... Christian Saingilo is devastated so much that possibly in Georgia we will have only an Ingilo or two living in Tbilisi to remind of Ingilos” (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #98).

Of course, this kind of situation diminished the trust of Ingilos alienated even without that. They complained to Zakaria Edyl, a famous person in Tbilisi social circles: “No one has come and taken care of us. We have sent a number of telegrams but no one has answered to say a word of hope yet. Was not it necessary to reconcile us and stop violence against us... The both, the God and and the Georgians as well, forgot about us”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #35).

**Educational issues.** Z. Edyl described the causes of extirpation of Georgian consciousness in Saingilo in his interesting essay “Degeneration of Saingilo”. At the end of publication, the author asks: “What can we do to improve the situation?” and answers the question himself: “National schools can be salvation for us”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; #13, #14)

There was a single normal school in village Qax. It was a two-class school where Georgian language was scarcely taught. Ingilos did not subscribe to Georgian

newspapers and magazines as they could not read in Georgian. They could write in Russian better than in Georgian. One may find a lot of letters in families sent by their children, written in Georgian language but with Russian letters. (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; #13; #14).

R. Burchuladze, a member of Society for the Extension of Literacy among the Georgians was assigned to gather information necessary for establishing a school in Saingilo. According to his observations, the school should be established in village of Tasmalo, which was situated between Zaqatala and Qax and therefore, had a favorable location.

R. Burchuladze justified his opinion about the necessity of establishing the national schools in Saingilo in the following way: “Georgian Muslims living in Saingilo have lost their national identity and cannot differentiate between the belief and nationality. Local Georgian Muslims think that it is impossible to be a Georgian without being Christian. Because of that, they avoid anything originated from Georgian culture and increasingly forget their mother tongue. .. This kind of unawareness and hostility to Georgian culture was never observed among the Muslim Georgians in Adzharia and Meskhet-Javakheti. Because of that, it is necessary to work hard for a long time and concern about reviving national feelings among the Muslim Georgians in Saingilo. (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; #50)

The above mentioned publication expressed the great care taken while igniting the national consciousness and establishing the school. In particular they determined the following necessary measures for establishing the Georgian school in Tasmalo: a) to invite a male teacher as a woman had no influence in patriarchal Saingilo (unlike Adzharia); b) to invite mullah who would teach Muslim religion in native language. (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; #50).

Tasmalo School would surely be established if the Revolution of February 1917 did not occur. After the revolution, it was decided to establish even the bigger Georgian school in Saingilo.

On March 25, 1917, decision was made about establishing a school in Qax at the meeting held in celebration of revolution. The school would be named for Constantine Bairamashvili, Ingilo revolutionist of 1905. To perform the plan, 285 rubles were collected

(“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #73). Finally, Constantine Bairamashvili National School was not established. “Sakartvelo” reported Sopin, Headmaster of educational education in the period of Tsar, did not concede the building for school. Moreover, instead of establishing a new national school even the Georgian school of Ingilos’ village Aliabat was closed (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #269).

According to the publications published in “Sakartvelo”, Ingilos (especially the Christian Ingilos) had great aspiration for education. M. Janashvili informed that the first educated Ingilo – Dimitri Janashvili inherited many Ingilo teachers and despite the inexistence of schools at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were several engineers, agronomists and physicians among 14000 Christian Ingilos. “According to Ilia Chkonia, Saingilo overrode the other regions of Georgia (except Khoni) in terms of number of educated persons”, reported Moses Janashvili (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #125

At the end of the article, M. Janashvili addresses to the Muslim Ingilos: “Georgians of Adzharia –Klarjeti believe in Islamism but it does not prevent them from being good Georgians... Follow your brothers - Christian Ingilos, be educated, and enjoy your knowledge and self-consciousness. Otherwise, you will remain poor and will mix with the majority. We do not insist on your Christianity. Rather than that, we wish you were educated and self-conscious; So, love us as we love you”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #125).

**3. Religious conflict in Saingilo.** At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Saingilo turned into battlefield of Islamism and Christianity. The publication of Z. Edyl, published in “Sakartvelo”, reports that Azerbaijani Muslims living in Saingilo bought slaughtered animals from Christian population but the Muslim Ingilos did not eat meat of animals slaughtered by Christians. Moreover, they never drank water with dish, used by Christians (“Sakartvelo”; 1916; #13).

When the monarchy of Russia was overthrown and Turkey succeeded in World War I, Muslims (mainly the Azerbaijani Muslims) began massive violence

and persecution against Christians. **Raphiel Ingilo (Ivanitski) reported sharply on religious conflicts in “Sakartvelo” newspaper.**

“Sakartvelo” reports that the local executive committee decided to establish two Georgian schools in Saingilo and to open agricultural educational institution. Sale of unmarried girls was prohibited. These measures implemented in favor of improving national consciousness were perceived by Muslims as the beginning of turning Christian and the results were immediate. Kapiz Ependi, Daghestanian Head of Executive Committee of Saingilo raided Christian Ingilos with his detachment. He took away Markoz Parsmanashvili’s wife and made her merry Muslim. She forced six Ingilos to turn Muslims and beat lots of inhabitants with gun-stock. (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #113).

During their unruly sack, Muslims raided St. George church of Kurmukhi. They stole the holy things and cut the icons with swords; they took down the cross from the church dome and stepped down on it. Only the Gospel remained intact. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #98).

Priest Mikheil Kuloshvili fell victim to Muslim brutality. His dead body was found in eighteen days. His hands were tied up. He seemed to have starved for several days. He was beaten on the back, along the backbone; his ribs were broken. It seemed that they have tried to cut his throat and burn his body but unsuccessfully. It was obvious that the priest was killed because of religious reasons as far as he used to denounce ignorance of mullahs and their harmful traditions such as taking away one’s wife, sale of unmarried girls to their future husbands, turning people Muslim forcefully. Because of that, “supporters” of Islamism had threatened the priest for several times. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #6).

In Georgian newspaper “Samshoblo”, Heidar Beg Abashidze expressed his dissatisfaction with R. Ingilo’s publication. He regarded that R. Ingilo was igniting conflict between Muslims and Christians. In response to this accusation, R. Ingilo answered that he had denounced the people trying to popularize Christianity in Saingilo as well for many times but consequences of popularizing Islam were equally fatal and thee events occurring in Zaqatala district were terror rather than

popularization. He said that his publications were not aimed at discussing the religious issues. He only wished Georgians from Saingilo (no matter, whether they are Christian or Muslim) acknowledged one another as brothers despite their religious difference. “We are inspired by a single idea... that is the revival of unity of Georgia. Catholics and Orthodox, Muslim and Gregorian – all the Georgians will be full-fledged members of supreme state of their motherland”, wrote R. Ingilo (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #110).

In “Sakartvelo” the same author wrote: “Georgia cannot concede Zaqatala district as episcopo Elisse preached Christianity here before St. Nino’s arrival. He travelled all around Hereti and built a gorgeous cathedral close to Nukh, called Gishi Cloister. Nowadays it is included in Armenia. There are lots of historical remnants like this in Saingilo... We need great effort to avoid degradation of this district. We should ask our brothers, Adzharians to assist us with this great deed. They will assure Ingilo Muslims that it is possible to be Muslim and Georgian at the same time”. (“Sakartvelo”, 1917; #282).

Therefore, the newspaper “Sakartvelo” described a cruel persecution of Christianity. The newspaper was always careful in considering the religious or national conflicts, which endangered the unity of Georgia, but “sometimes it is better to say”.

**4. Statistics published about Saingilo; publicists; pseudonyms.** We found 93 publications in total in newspaper “Sakartvelo” of 1915-21. Most of these publications are informational.

Problems of Saingilo were mostly reported by two famous Ingilos – Raphiel Ingilo (Ivanitski) and Moses Janashvili and the journalist – Ilia Chkonia. Zakaria Edyl as well was the author of many interesting letter. Leading article by Spiridon Kedia is also worth mentioning. The article considers the problem of extending the Georgian enlightenment in Saingilo. (“Sakartvelo”; 1915; #10).

The publications about this region were signed by the authors mostly without pen names. Therefore, we gathered just several pen names in news stories about

Saingilo. They are: Local; **S.K-dia**; Thoma miner; **D.K.**; Observer; Gurian; N-anu; Kizikian; I. Marushidze; Kechneli; S.D.S.

Surely, the pen name **S.K-dia** stands for Spiridon Kedia and **D.K.** stands for David Kasradze. The other pen names are not identified.

In addition to the mentioned famous persons, the less famous journalists too reported on the problems of Saingilo. We believe that they were inhabitants of Saingilo. Probably they majored in quite different professions and they sent letters about the problems of their region to the editorial office of “Sakartvelo”.

**G. Atanelashvili; A. Machabeli; Gr. Zhghenti; Bartlome Khutsishvili** – These persons reported on food problems, hard criminal conditions, educational issues and many other problematic issues which Saingilo faced at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, their names are not so meaningful nowadays. We have certain information only about A. Machabeli who wrote more intensively about Samachablo and published only one travel essay about Saingilo. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #164; 165; 166; 167)

## **Conclusion**

**Abkhazia.** While analyzing the news stories of “Sakartvelo” dedicated to Abkhazia, we tried to distinguish the facts which describe the characteristics of separatist movements in the region. In particular:

**1. Persecution of Georgian language.** Georgian language was persecuted in Abkhazia even before the overthrow of Tsarist Empire. The language was persecuted in schools, church, everyday life.

When the Tsarist Empire was overthrown, unlike the other regions, most part of Abkhazian population (including ethnic Abkhazians) did not accept studying at school in Georgian. As for Abkhazian language, the political group representing “Sakartvelo”, regarded that like the whole Abkhazian culture, it needed special care.

**2. Issue of autocephality of Orthodox Church of Abkhazia.** According to the publications issued in “Sakartvelo”, one may conclude that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, ethnic Abkhazians included a group supporting the autocephality of Abkhazian church. Publicists of “Sakartvelo” regarded that a requirement for autocephality was consequence of centurial policy of Russianization. They believed that the only way of maintaining autonomy of Abkhazian Orthodox Church was a return of Georgian Orthodox Church in the center of history territories of Abkhazia. Though preaching of Ambrosi Khelaia, Chkondidian metropolitan, the Georgian Orthodox Church informed the Abkhazian orthodox population: “Our church has never implemented the policy of incorporating the church of smaller nations, neither in the past... when our church was the arbiter of its own destiny, nor nowadays. Just on the contrary, it has always contributed to nationalization of the church of people of the same communion...” – this address of St. Ambrossi is protected in “Sakartvelo” newspaper.

**3. Reporting on political situation.** A group of Abkhazian separatists take advantage of hard foreign situation and initiated the internal tension. First they tried to separate from Georgia with the assistance of population of mountainous region of Georgia; then they allied with Turkey and finally with White Guardists.

The mentioned processes, attempts of coup d'etat and the battle against Denikin's army were reported by Georgian newspaper “Sakartvelo” again. In addition, the newspaper reported on Bolshevik military aggressions which occurred in Abkhazia. However, separatist Abkhazians did not support the protest actions. Only the local Georgian, Armenian, Greek and Russian population of Abkhazia, who had lost their plots of land, supported the actions. Accordingly, it was different kind of separatism originated from social problems. The editorial staff of “Sakartvelo” newspaper made the same evaluation of mentioned events.

4. Some of the publications of “Sakartvelo” criticized the Menshevik government's policy in Abkhazia. Publicists of “Sakartvelo” were dissatisfied with personnel and election policy of Menshevik government. They believed that Georgian government was obliged to fight more effectively for maintaining the town of Sochi. In addition, “Sakartvelo” criticized an issue of distributing the plots of land in Abkhazia.

**Last, it should be mentioned that editorial staff did not blame separatist Abkhazians. Almost all the analytical letters demonstrate that the leaders of the**

**newspaper regarded Abkhazian separatism as a result of Russianization policy. Accordingly, they believed that Abkhazians were victims rather than guilty.**

**Samachablo.** Georgian newspaper “Sakartvelo” has protected lots of facts about the life of ethnic Ossetians in Samachablo at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**1. In publications, Georgian Ossetians are characterized as very hardworking, purposeful nation.** Besides, the newspaper describes historical Shida Kartli as a kind of enclave, the territory controlled by criminals, which was impossible to be controlled first for the government of South Caucasia and later for the government of Georgia.

**2. “Sakartvelo” reported on anti-Georgian sentiments of ethnic Ossetians living in Samachablo at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.** The editorial staff predicted that they would endanger the territorial unity of Georgia.

One of the journalists of “Sakartvelo” stated: “Nowadays, Ossetians are surrounding Kartli. They have intruded into its center. Kartli faces a serious danger. Our government must timely solve this rather serious issue and allocate a different place to Ossetians to prevent them from dividing Kartli into two halves and to avoid a great danger therefore”. “Sakartvelo”; 1918; #207).

The publications show the fear for the possibility that the Ossetians of Samachablo would wish to consolidate with their historical homeland, North Ossetia. As one of the publicists of “Sakartvelo” informed, they were even paving a road in Roki pass for this purpose. “Sakartvelo”; 1918; #207). The wish for consolidation with historical motherland is one of the characteristics of Ossetian separatism currently too. However, the tunnel in the pass rather than the road through it contributes to realizing this wish today.

**3. Ossetian separatism described in newspaper seems bloodier (unlike Abkhazian one).** It is most clearly shown in publications reporting on rebellions of Tskhinvali and Sachkhere districts. “Bloodyness” of Ossetian separatism was preconditioned by the fact that in Samachablo it was supported by Bolshevik Russia – the cruelest force of that period.

Last, **the editorial staff did not even consider the necessity of giving autonomy to Ossetians living in Samachablo.** Shalva Amirejibi, the famous Georgian publicist wrote:

“There is no more Georgian place in Georgia as the one where today Ossetians are settled”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #64). The editor, Geronti Kikodze stated: “Our state sovereignty expands to the whole historic territory of ours. Ossetians living in Java gorge are also included in this territory like the Abkhazians of Sukhumi district, Tatars of Borchalo district or the other people of Georgia...” Ossetians of Java gorge have their language, but have no literature and national culture. Therefore, it is impossible to speak about cultural or territorial autonomy of Ossetians...”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1918; #124)

**Saingilo.** Georgian newspaper “Sakartvelo” reported on the life of Ingilos at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Publications show that it was ethnical Azerbaijanis who caused problems for the first democratic Republic of Georgia not the local Ingilos or immigrant Daghestanians. They owned and governed the whole region.

The publicists of “Sakartvelo” considered Saingilo as a territorial unit of Georgia. They were concerned about the social problems of Christian as well as Muslim population.

**1. In relation with food problems** it became clear that local merchants took advantage of shortage in food caused by the World War I. Besides, the members of consumers’ association divided the products among themselves and sold them at much higher prices later instead of assisting the population.

**2. While reporting on criminal conditions,** publicists of “Sakartvelo” showed that the chaos was caused by Azerbaijani Muslims. Robbery, burglary and murder were common practice for them and they were cruel while committing the crime.

**3. While reporting on educational issues,** the editorial staff tried to popularize establishment of Georgian schools. Especially, they were concerned about Muslim Ingilos. On behalf of its journalists, “Sakartvelo” called them for: “Georgians of Adzharia – Klarjeti believe in Islamism but it does not prevent them from being good Georgians... Follow your brothers - Christian Ingilos, be educated, and enjoy your knowledge and self-consciousness. Otherwise, you will remain poor and will mix with the majority. We do not insist on your Christianity. Rather than that, we wish you were educated and self-conscious; so, love us as we love you”. (“Sakartvelo”; 1917; #125).

4. Last but not least, the newspaper reported on **religious conflict** in Saingilo and cruelty of Muslims against the Christians. Because of this, the famous public figure, Memed Beg Abashidze blamed the famous publicist, R. Ingilo for igniting the religious conflict. However, this was the case, when the editorial staff preferred “to say”.

Thus, in 1915-1921, the national-democratic newspaper “Sakartvelo” dedicated a number of publications to problems of Abkhazia, Samachablo and Saingilo. The journalists described the current processes of mentioned regions and protected lots of significant facts for descendants.

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