

*Manuchar Guntsadze, 2020*

*Volume 5 Issue 3, pp. 814-821*

*Date of Publication: 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020*

*DOI- <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2019.53.814821>*

*This paper can be cited as: Guntsadze, M., (2020). The First Period of Anti-Government Activities in the Shida Kartli Highlands, Georgia. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 5(3), 814 – 821.*

*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.*

## **THE FIRST PERIOD OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE SHIDA KARTLI HIGHLANDS, GEORGIA**

**Manuchar Guntsadze**

*Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia*

*Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, Georgia*

*[manuchar.guntsadze@tsu.ge](mailto:manuchar.guntsadze@tsu.ge)*

*[m.guntsadze@manuscript.ge](mailto:m.guntsadze@manuscript.ge)*

---

### **Abstract**

*Research of the conflict is very sensitive issue but very actual in Georgian case. The aim of this paper is to discuss some moments of problem connected to so called "South Ossetia". More specifically, its initial period.*

*This conflict emerged at the period of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918-1921. During this time there were 3 facts of Anti-governmental activities from Ossetian Bolsheviks (in 1918, 1919 and 1920). Studying of this conflict is getting more popularity from 90-ies of 20<sup>th</sup> century when conflict renewed and Georgia gained independence from Soviet Union. After this time huge number of scientific articles and books were published concerning that conflicts.*

### **Keywords**

*Caucasus, Georgian Modern History, Conflicts, so called "South Ossetia"*

---

### **1. Introduction**

The conflict in the modern Tskhinvali region dates back to 1918-1921. This is the period of time during which the scale of anti-government speeches is gradually increasing. The section of the d two periods, I stayed because of the magnitude of the events and results. In the first

period, I combined anti-government activities in 1918-1919, and the events of 1920 (Guntsadze, 2013/2014) were in the second period. This will help me better follow the course of events with regard to periodization.

Ossetians requirements between the two periods were changed: If at first was their desire for autonomy or a separate district Unit was later called. "South Ossetia", or part of Shida Kartli's historic territory, demanded separation from Georgia and accession to Russia

## **2. Activities of 1918**

Before discussing anti-government activities, we need to briefly review the process of settling Ossetians in Georgia, which dates back to the late 15th century. This is when the Ossetians settled in Dvaleti. Two centuries later they fully assimilated Dvaleti and assimilated the Georgians living there. From the first half of the 17th century, the Ossetians gradually began settling in Truso and Magran-Dvaleti, and in the second half of the same century, gradually settled in the Shida Kartli highlands to the south. From the second half of the XIX century the villages of Shida Kartli were also used. Ossetian that was not local population and their settlement later time, and in fact seems to suggest that the XIX century, the population census data in the conflict zone are registered as refugees by the Ossetians (Topchishvili, 2007). About ethnic minorities migration and their identity please see article: Chaklader, 2019.

Now I will move on to the beginning and development of anti-government activities by Ossetian Bolsheviks throughout Georgia's new history.

Time anti-government protests deprived were well chosen, it is obvious that the events continued to fall of the government in a difficult period, it would conflict with the Ottoman Empire, with Denikin, or with the Bolshevik Azerbaijan. The reason of course was that the chance was growing up.

Activation of the Ossetian Bolsheviks begins after the 1917 revolution. The People's Assembly of South Ossetia and the National Council have since been established, from which new initiatives or complaints have been put forward. They are trying to take over any so-called rule. In the territory of "South Ossetia" in order to establish a separate unit or autonomy (From the history of Georgian and Ossetian peoples' relations, 1991).

On December 15-17, a meeting of the South Ossetian delegates convened in Tskhinvali convened the National Council, and on January 4, 1918, they sent a notice to the National

Council of Georgia that all issues concerning the Ossetian nation from that time on should be addressed to the National Council of South Ossetia. The National Council of South Ossetia is discussing how South Ossetia should be formed (from the history of relations between Georgian and Ossetian peoples, 1991). At the end of 1917, a project was created and submitted to the National Council of Georgia, where delegates from South Ossetia demanded the creation of a separate administrative unit centered on Tskhinvali (K. Kekelidze National Center for Manuscripts in Georgia, M. Machabeli's personal archive, Archive unit №1523).

From mid-March already starting trouble in Georgia, Shida Kartli highlands (today so called "South Ossetia"). A description of these events is provided in the March 30, 1918, issue of the People's Affairs newspaper, which details the events.

On March 16, the Ossetian delegation will arrive in Tskhinvali with a package addressee to the local administration on the name of the local administration of Gori. The problem was that the Ossetians were demanding an immediate response, sending the package to Gori and it would have been too late to respond. That is why the representatives of the Ossetian delegation, Rajden Gagua and Porfile Efremidze, opened the package.

The statement consisted of four articles: "(1) Division lands for us as soon as possible; 2) Expel the following individuals working in the revolutionary organization from Gori: Costa Kazishvili, Sosika Goginovi, Shakro Kasradze and Iia Maisuradze; 3) Expel all princes and nobles from Gori; 4) Give us freedom of speech and assembly. The deadline for replying is 3pm on the same day (March 16)." (Bluashvili, 2005).

This is where actions that are incompatible with the reality of the Ossetian Bolsheviks manifest. They knew that the issue could not be resolved in Tskhinvali, as it was beyond their rights and responsibilities, and that the period of time given to the administration was insufficient to send the document to Gori and to respond from there. That is, they were given the opportunity to use this moment as a reason to launch anti-government speeches. To get a real result, it would probably be logical to allow more time for discussions, even for a few days.

Their demand for the division of land was unnecessary as work was going on in this direction, and the demand for assembly and freedom of speech made no sense because they had a national council and their freedom of speech was not restricted.

A meeting of the Peasants 'and Workers' Councils and the Executive Committee was held in Tskhinvali on this issue, but resolving the issue was beyond their competence.

At 3 o'clock, of course, the Ossetian Bolsheviks did not receive a reply, and they probably expected it. They used this as a reason and started shooting from the mountains.

Timely action was needed. The only thing they could do in Tskhinvali was to negotiate and discuss the real issues. The Georgian delegation was headed by Sandro Ketskhoveli, who was also accompanied by a member of the Ossetian delegation, Chochiev.

The Ossetians stopped shooting only after Chochiev's intervention. The negotiations ended in vain, and it became necessary to have a meeting with Gori local administration.

On March 17, the red army of Gori arrived in Tskhinvali, led by Commissioner Giorgi Machabeli. At first glance, the new stage of negotiations is successfully completed. The Ossetians promise to fulfill all their demands except for the third point, that is, expulsion of the nobility.

A new demand was raised by the Protestants. In order to keep the promise of the Georgians unchanged, they demanded confirmation of the rally, and the rally was scheduled for March 18 the following day.

The rally was held in Dgvrisi Square; The first speech of promises Machabeli found repeated publicly. Afterwards, Tskhinvali's commissioner Kulumbegov made a speech, which began with additional demands that were not discussed during the talks. He calls for the liberation of several Ossetians who were involved in the uprising. Speaking of his Protestants start shooting.

Armed clashes continued the next day, but due to the scarcity of bullets the Red Squadron could not resist and were defeated. The organizers of anti-government demonstrations cut off the lines connecting Gori to the Georgian army in Tskhinvali.

The Protestants brutally beaten the Georgian army. Then they start robbery in Tskhinvali.

Developments have shown that the demands of the Ossetian Bolsheviks were only a pretext for launching an armed confrontation and then for plotting a robbery, but that their success would not last long and that the state would sooner or later establish order.

The results of the suppression of anti-government speeches were presented to the Transcaucasian government by Valiko Jugheli (Djugeli, 1920). According to him, the Red Guards were able to liberate Tskhinvali on March 22, and three more days in the surrounding villages. The captives were released. Rebel gathering place for the town of Java constituted. Actions were being careful in order not to increase the confrontation that existed (Toidze, 1991).

Despite the suppression of anti-government speeches, it remains an unpleasant factor in people's memory. The Protestants did not succeed in their actions; their speeches were followed only by bloodshed.

In this confrontation of 1918 on August 2, of the National Council meeting was Gregory Veshapeli, the audience heralded commencement of the writer, Ia Ekaladze, opinion, whose mother was Ossetian. It was mentioned that the Ossetians who started the demonstrations get education in Russia and it was the result of the Russian ideology that they started a similar wave of protest in Georgia.

This may have been the reason that after the weakening of Georgia, the Russian state could easily spread its influence.

The anti-government speeches of 1918 did not produce any results, which led to an unplanned strategy. It also does not appear that the Russians were helping the rebels by any means at this time. It can also be suggested that this was a kind of grounding from Russia for further developments.

### **3. Activities of 1919**

The rise of the demands of the Ossetian Bolsheviks was not hampered by the unsuccessful end of anti-government protests in 1918. The National Council of South Ossetia was distrustful of the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

In January 1919, the National Council of South Ossetia decided to establish an independent judiciary, which the Ministry of Justice of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, of course, disagreed with. There was a unified judicial system in the country, with equal rights for all citizens of Georgia, regardless of their nationality. Such opposition has angered the National Council of South Ossetia, and supporters of anti-government protests have called for it not to vote in the Gori uyezd and Georgia Constituent Assembly (From the History of Georgian and Ossetian Peoples Relations, 1991).

By doing so, they themselves refused to take part in the formation of the supreme legislative body of Georgia - the Constituent Assembly. This was their civil right, because, according to Georgian legislation, ethnic minorities living in the country enjoyed the same rights as Georgians or other nationals, that is, citizens of Georgia in general (Constitution of Georgia, 1992).

On February 26, 1919, a meeting of Ossetian workers in Tbilisi was held to discuss the claims raised during anti-government speeches and the controversy that was provoked by Protestant actions. At the meeting, they objected to the actions and demands of supporters of anti-government Activities (Toidze 1991)

The Tbilisi Ossetian assembly also spoke of North Ossetia's role in causing dissatisfaction among Ossetians residing in Georgia, that is, as in 1918, it now played a certain role in Russian ideology to spark controversy in Georgia as North Ossetia was part of Russia. This is the name they used to refer to, as the North Ossetian Autonomous District was officially established only in 1924.

The Georgian government has obtained documents suggesting that the National Council of South Ossetia was planning an uprising, after which they would launch their own demands. About economic role in conflict you can see: Lawrence, 2018

In June 1919, the National Council of South Ossetia drafted the "Draft Constitution of South Ossetia", which was presented to the Constituent Assembly of Georgia. Under this constitution, the canton of South Ossetia was forbidden from concluding treaties with other states, but in effect constituted a separate state in Georgia that did not provide for the rights of other nationalities, which were enforced. They lived in "South Ossetia". After the project was drafted, the Ossetians demanded Tskhinvali as the center of the South Ossetian administration. According to the 1886 census, there were 1135 Georgians, 1953 Jews, 744 Armenians, and no Ossetians in Tskhinvali (Totadze, 1993). According to the 1922 census, the number of Ossetians living in Tskhinvali was relatively small when the South Ossetian Autonomous District was created. There were 1436 Georgians, 1651 Jews, 765 Armenians and 613 Ossetians in Tskhinvali during this period, which accounted for about 13.5% of the total population of Tskhinvali (Census of November 30, 1922, 1923).

The Georgian side took note of their demands that the area where the Ossetians lived was compact, and avoided further complications. No one in Georgia wanted to start a new uprising and offered a reciprocal project to the National Council of South Ossetia.

The option developed by the Georgian side was to create a Java uyezd where the case and local administration were to be implemented in the mother tongue. This was the maximum that an independent state could give to the Ossetian Bolsheviks at that time. They disapproved of this option and made additional demands; Among them was the proclamation of Tskhinvali as the

administrative center, i.e. the Bolsheviks were still demanding what they were not allowed to do. The Republic of Georgia has not satisfied this request

In 1919, for the two-year anniversary of the Revolution, the Bolshevik Party was planning a new wave of anti-government protests in Georgia, supported by the Caucasus Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The Georgian government heard about it and began arrests of the participants two days earlier.

On October 23, armed anti-government protests began in the Rocky area, but they failed to resist the Republic of Georgia (From the history of Georgian-Ossetian relations, 1991). Speeches were easily suppressed, but as it turned out, they were temporary and preparations for larger events were taking place in 1920.

The Georgian authorities were able to suppress another uprising in the Shida Kartli (Georgian region) mountains, but they failed to eliminate the threat that was to be expected there, which eventually led to a major confrontation.

The suppression of anti-government activities of 1918-1919 only delayed the process, not its final resolution. The Ossetian Bolsheviks, of course, were entitled to some demands, and the Georgian side was also offering them the option of creating a Java patch. It would also be a case in which Ossetians were granted some privilege over other ethnic minorities living in Georgia, but the Georgian side still agreed. As it turned out later, the National Council of South Ossetia, or more precisely the Caucasian Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), had plans to go farther, so they considered this failure temporary. One fact is that these anti-government speeches did not have a good impact on Georgian-Ossetian relations, though this did not escalate into the ethnoconflict that the subsequent rebel Ossetian Bolsheviks sought to portray.

## **References**

Bluashvili, U. (2005). *Georgian-Ossetian Conflict: Who and Why Started It?* 40 p.

Census of November 30, 1922 (1923). 45 p.

Chaklader, M. A. (2019). *Understanding Ethnic Identity in the Context of Internal Migration: A Case Study of University Students of Ethnic Minority Origins in Urban Bangladesh.* *People: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(1). Retrieved from

<https://grdspublishing.org/index.php/people/article/view/1872>

<https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2019.51.328349>

Constitution of Georgia, (1992). Constitution of Georgia (Adopted by the Constituent Assembly of Georgia on February 21, 1921), Tbilisi, "Homeland", 28 p. Electronic version:

<http://www.nplg.gov.ge/dlibrary/coll/0001/000299/>

Djugeli, V. (1920). Heavy Cross (Notes), Tbilisi, 250 p.

From the history of Georgian and Ossetian peoples' relations, (1991). 144 p.

From the History of Georgian and Ossetian Peoples Relations. (1991).

Guntsadze, M. (2013/2014). Ossetian uprising of 1920 in Shida Kartli according to the Georgian press materials. Journal Georgian Source-Studies XV-XVI.

Ifeanyichukwu Michael, A., Nneka Ifeoma, O., & Chibueze Lawrence, O. (2018). Political Economy of Cattle Colony: Between Herders-Farmers Conflicts and Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2).

Retrieved from <https://grdspublishing.org/index.php/people/article/view/1611>

<https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2018.42.17101726>

K. Kekelidze National Center for Manuscripts in Georgia, M. Machabeli's personal archive, Archive unit №1523.

Tchumburidze, D. (2003). National Liberation Struggle of the Georgian People in the Early XX Century (1918-1921)

The struggle for the victory of the Soviet power in Georgia. (1958). The struggle for the victory of the Soviet power in Georgia: Documents and materials (1917-1921), Tbilisi, 788 p.

Toidze, L. (1991). How the Autonomous District of South Ossetia was created.

Topchishvili, R. (2007). Ethnography of the Caucasian People.

Totadze, L. (1993). Demographic portrait of Georgia.