

EDUCATION AND GEORGIAN NATIONALISM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY (1918-1921)

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Abstract

From the second half of the 19th century, Georgia faced new challenges. On the one hand, it had to overcome the problems that arose as a result of the breakdown of the feudal system and establish itself in a new socio-economic environment and, most importantly, continue the struggle for the restoration of Georgia's independence in a different way: instead of armed protests, through education, knowledge, organization and its demand. to be relevant to the interests and capabilities of the era and Georgia. On the other hand, this is the period when a part of the Georgian cultural elite tries to propagate nationalism, increase knowledge, introduce the country's history to the wider strata, idealize the past, and stir up the consciousness of protecting national values. Also, since the 90s of the 19th century, new social strata have appeared: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the foundation is laid for the formation of political parties, which had their own visions of gaining independence and the future development of Georgia.

Keywords: Georgian nationalism, education, transformation, nationalism, challenges of the era.

Educational system of Georgia at the beginning of the 20th century

Today, when the issue of nationalism is so relevant and various theoretical trends and tendencies have been created, some theoretical trends such as modernism, pay great attention to the factor of education in the formation of a modern nation. Thus, it's worth studying one of the important stages of the history of Georgia namely 1918-1921 years, from the point of the educational system.

The establishment of the capitalist system contributed to the formation of new social classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The removal of serfdom significantly changed the political, social, and economic system. New demands and challenges have emerged in the new environment. Not only the proletariat and the bourgeoisie but the whole society underwent fundamental transformations. Especially since the national liberation movement in Europe in the XIX century was quite strong, which led to the formation of nation-states. Georgia perceived these changes differently. As an occupied part of the Russian Empire, it was naturally influenced by the ongoing events there. While the process of nation-building was underway in Europe, Georgia was looking for new ways to fight for freedom. The Georgian cultural and political elite, via raising public awareness, tried to create a common Georgian space and involve all social strata equally in the struggle for independence. This process was in progress from 1918-1921. Therefore, it is important to raise a point and analyze how the process of the national movement was manifested.

After the abolition of state independence of Georgia by the Russian Empire and the fact that the main object of loyalty of the Georgian nation - the king no longer existed, the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church was abolished also and the representatives of the clergy faced serious obstacles for the realization of right established over the centuries. It is noteworthy, that the clergy have always been the main link with the people and the bearer of national ideas. After the deprivation of that right, Russia still failed to completely eliminate the centuries-old union between the people and the church. Thus, it became necessary to create a new body that would facilitate communication with the people and, most importantly preaching national ideas. A new epoch brought to the school, in addition to being an educational institution, new needs. Therefore, it became necessary to identify:

1. The role and methods of the Georgian cultural elite in demanding education in the Georgian

language. 2. The approaches facilitating the economic education and raise of national awareness through schools and the involvement of all social strata in the struggle for freedom.

The abolition of serfdom resulted in the establishment of the capitalist order. The new economic form has led to some changes in the social system. New social classes were formed: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In fact, the nobility was in danger of disappearing. That process was carried out in stages. The peasants' functions were limited, and it was difficult for them to establish themselves in a different environment. The non-Georgian bourgeoisie, which was a materially powerful force, was less interested in the future of the Georgian nation, while the proletariat was initially obsessed with class consciousness. All this had a negative impact on the unity of the Georgians, so it became necessary to have a strong ideology around which all Georgians would unite.

The state of Georgia clearly manifested its goal at the March 12, 1919 meeting of the Constituent Assembly, where Alexander Lomtadze declared: "We want to leave Asia and join the family of common peoples of Europe, and with our own strength and the help of others, if we deserve this help from anyone, to become a full member of the common family of peoples of European states and European democracies. We want everyone to understand it and show consideration. I think the European states whose representatives are here today, the United Kingdom, famous for its democratic constitution, France, the cradle of the great revolution, democratic Switzerland, great America, give it a proper account. "They will do it, and indeed we will play our part in carrying out this humane slogan, by virtue of which a small nation and its democracy must be allowed to decide its own destiny"¹.

L. Botsvadze denoted in the journal- "Education" in 1917: "Initially, public schools should necessarily follow the path of comprehensive education in our country, but not in the way it is accomplished today, but in a different way. Georgian public education requires enhancing the learning process at schools, as well as the selection of school subjects, the complete reorganization of the school, the expansion of the curriculum, the education in the Georgian language, the observance of sound pedagogical principles, and the rapprochement of school with life. If we want the comprehensive school in general and the public school, in particular, to scrupulously serve the cause of education, it should be arranged in accordance with local conditions as it is in the advanced countries. Europe and America set the best example in this regard as well. "What constitutes the development of a child's natural talent in European and American schools has either been completely rejected in Georgian and Russian schools, or they are only now trying to renovate schools in this way"².

There is interesting information about the importance of the educational factor in theoretical literature. According to some scholars, raising education to the forefront has given rise to nationalism. Benedict Anderson in his work "Imaginary Societies", searches for the fundamentals of nationalism in the eighteenth-century European "printed nationalism." "Until the eighteenth century, there was little sense of national unity, except for a generalized understanding of allegiance to the throne. Due to the emergence of large-scale printed speech in the native language and, consequently, the spread of literacy among the masses, ordinary people were for the first time given the opportunity to identify themselves with other people whom they had never seen or never met. This process was facilitated by the publishers, who, in order to make a profit, tried to expand the market and, consequently, increase the level of literacy among the citizens. The rapid spread of ideologies also contributed to the further strengthening of such groupings. Ideologies divided peoples according to languages, cultures and the historical past, full of self-sacrifice and other heroic deeds for the homeland"³.

The first decades of the nineteenth century, conventionally, was a period of time when talking about the professionalization of history was feasible. By the middle of the century, there were twenty-eight professors of history occupied at nine universities. Sixty years later, history was taught by about 185 professors. Their number was increasing until the 1930s, and in 1931 it topped its peak to 238 pro It is true that on May 26, 1918, the state independence of Georgia was restored, but along with

¹ Central Historical Archive of Georgia, (hereinafter referred to as STSA), p. 1833, ref. 1, Sak. # 81, p. 4

² L. Botsvadze, Public School and Vocational Education, Journal, Education, 1917, # 2, p. 89

³ Ted Levellen, Political Anthropology, Introduction, Third Edition, Tbilisi, University Press, 2017, p. 224

the solution of many other problems, one of the important places was occupied by the educational reform. For 117 years, the Russian educational system had a negative impact on Georgian national consciousness, and therefore, the adaptation of this occurrence to the Georgian reality was a matter of state importance.

The role and factor of education always occupied a special place in Georgia and had a great influence on the formation and development of public consciousness due to the challenges of the epoch. In that period, when attention was paid to the educational space which acquired besides the educational also the national and state importance. Georgia met those challenges in a different reality. The Russian governmental system maximally used education for the Russification and transform of the Georgian people. That is why the political or cultural elite that came to power after the restoration of state independence was given a dual mission of responsibility. With the resolution of issues of state importance, educational reform became the key point for the resolution of foreign or domestic problems in the country.

Naturally, the interest in the problem of education was not limited to the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, and all this had certain preconditions. It should be indicated that from the 1860s a completely new stage of development began implying the raise the scale of education and, most importantly, its accessibility for all social strata. One of the most important methods of disseminating education was the increase in educational centers. raising the education factor to the forefront, its connection with economic, political, cultural progress, raising national awareness. From the second half of the XIX century until 1918, the representatives of the Georgian political and cultural elite tried their best to convert the Georgian society to the national forms in the conditions of lack of independence and Russification through education. fessors of history⁴.

The active struggle of the Georgian cultural and political elite for public literacy was not accidental. First, a certain reassessment of values occurred due to the current changes in the world, and the problem of mass education was raised in all countries. Naturally, the Georgian literate, who shared European ideas, was trying to introduce a new system in Georgia. Second, it was doubly important for the Georgian unity to act within the framework of common consciousness for the revival of the country, which should have become the basis for the further restoration of Georgia's state independence. "The main issue is public education and public upbringing. Introducing good morals, raising an educated crowd, providing them with refreshing and developing entertainment, awakening the spiritual interests of the people, fighting against their darkness and ignorance - this is what we must strive for along with other means if we sincerely wish kindness to people and really want to help them"⁵.

The wrong educational system together with strengthening the Russian language in schools, harmed the teaching and educational system, losing the national form: "The only reason of sorrowful occurrence/infertility in the public school was and still is the irrational and un-pedagogical system of education, using the Russian language, unfamiliar to children and not the native Georgian language".⁶ The Georgian cultural and political elite for the preservation of the Georgian language elaborated the following activities: 1. Publishing magazines and newspapers in Georgian. 2. Establishment of the Literacy Society in 1879. 3. Opening of schools throughout Georgia at the initiative of the Literacy Society. 4. Establishment of Georgian theater. The publicists of the newspaper "Temi" (Community) focus on the state of the Georgian language in almost every issue of the newspaper: "I do not think that the Georgian language had ever been so oppressed and disturbed in the past as it is now. Harassment, disdain of our language by natives and alien has a deplorable impact on us. The fact that our language does not receive proper attention and is suspended from compulsory subjects in school,

⁴ How to Write History, Introduction to the History and Practice of Discipline, editors Peter Lambert and Philip Scofield, Introductory Letter, General Editing of Translation, Comments by Mariam Chkhartishvili, Tbilisi, Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University Press, 2017, p. 32

⁵ Ibid., P. 549

⁶ Journal, Traveler, 1903, # 7-8, p. 503

conditions the Georgian student's and his Georgian parent's superficial attitude. These circumstances hinder the study of the Georgian language, literature, and history"⁷.

The publicists of the newspaper tried to justify the necessity of the educational process in Georgian. In particular, "Primary education built on indigenous soil is the strongest and greatest factor in the success of the country, it is now understood by every conscious man that the future of our country should be based on the healthy upbringing of the new generation and therefore, the attention of parents and society should be directed here. The hopes of individuals and parents, as well as the whole society, the implementation of the ideals of the nation, should be based on mental and moral upbringing of the youth, and the development of spiritual and material interests of our country is tightly linked to it"⁸. But the most important thing was not only the teaching and education in the Georgian language, but also the elimination of the bureaucratic spirit in schools. Information on educational issues can be found in any type of sources. Because that was the main demand and challenge of the era. The Georgian cultural and political elite tried their best to convince the public of the need to open a large number of schools. "The national school is the arena where the sense and mind of the nation should take the first step. It is the nurturer of the nation, who must empower the nation with the nourishment for soul and flesh that is proper for the nation's domestic life, its spiritual and physical life. And indeed, the schools differ: with the help of a deformed school one can completely degenerate a person, oppress his personality and kill his potential. With the help of a school, it is very easy to raise slaves. The old governmental schools in Georgia served those demands. Their primary purpose, instead of opening and developing the minds of the adolescent generation, was to degenerate the youth and bring up the bureaucratic officials they needed"⁹. That was the period of espousing nationalism and socialism evoking different ideas. Every movement or body tried to establish its own ideology in the people. The school was no exception. As much as national figures wanted to preach national, economic, and educational ideas through the school, so much did the Russian government use them to achieve its own goals. When the involvement of all social strata in the struggle for the restoration of independence became necessary, it became urgent to unite society around the unified idea. This function was to be performed by the school. "The only way to strengthen and revive the state is through education. "A democratic state can solve the problem with the help of self-conscious and educated/sophisticated people"¹⁰. Apart from the fact that the Georgian intelligentsia was interested in opening schools, which were to raise national awareness and the level of education, the Russian government had another interest in opening schools, to serve the russification process of Georgians. "In the 1901-1902 academic year, a total of 197 primary public schools were enrolled in the Tbilisi province, and 223 in the Kutaisi province. There were 420 primary schools in both provinces, while 67% of school-age children were left out of school. In 1904 the number of primary public schools equaled 543 but a year later the number was reduced to 513, and in 1906 to 491. In eastern Georgia alone, the government has closed 59 schools. Net of urban and rural one-grade and two-grade schools in Georgia was more reduced in the period of reactions of 1907-1908. By 1913, there were 23 gymnasiums for boys and girls, 4 progymnasiums, 3 real schools, 2,163 educational institutes, 25 civil and higher primary schools, and several schools in Georgia under the state administration. Within 1908-1912 years the Care Centre of Education in the Caucasian District did not establish a single secondary school in Georgia, while due to the initiative of the population and local funds, the 6th Gymnasium in Tbilisi, Pori Gymnasium for boys, progymnasiums in Akhaltsikhe, Khoni, Batumi, and Khashuri were opened"¹¹.

The educational issue underwent various stages of development. If at the beginning of the XX century the Russian government was actively trying to ban education in the Georgian language, the situation changed substantially after the February Revolution of 1917. The issue of nationalization of schools was one of the most important parts of the educational reforms that took place in Georgia, still undergoing the Russian influence. These processes found interesting development in the

⁷ Newspaper, Community, 1914, # 164, p. 2

⁸ Newspaper, Community, 1912, # 54, p. 3

⁹ Newspaper, Voice of the Warriors, 1917, # 40, p. 13

¹⁰ Newspaper, Republic of Georgia, 1920, # 41, p. 3

¹¹ T. Sarishvili, School and pedagogical currents in pre-revolutionary Georgia (1901-1921), Tbilisi, 1965, p. 26

following period. This issue was on the agenda of the meeting of the National Inter-Party Council. As it is known, the National Inter-Party Council convened on November 19, 1917, and on November 20, the issue of nationalization of schools was raised. After the restoration of Georgia's state independence, the government of the Democratic Republic took active steps to address this problem. As early as July 1917, the proletariat of Georgia and the Transcaucasia, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, demanded the introduction of a common, free, compulsory education for all (under 16) in their mother tongue, free school supplies, clothes, dinner, etc. Giving, arranging out-of-school and pre-school education, organizing free clubs, courses, libraries, small public libraries, excursions, kindergartens, orphanages and etc.¹² In September 1917 this event entered a new phase of development. The magazine "Education wrote in # 6-7 of 1917: "The Statute of the Caucasus Temporary Special Committee on the Nationalization of Schools was published. According to this regulation, it is obligatory for secondary schools to be nationalized in the alphabet and first preparatory classes, while in other classes it depends upon the opinion of the pedagogical council. If the council deems it convenient to introduce teaching in the mother tongue in other classes, it is given the right to nationalize these classes as well"¹³.

The following document corroborates the above stated: State Central Historical Archive of Georgia. Fund 1935, Description 1, Case # 20. This document is dated September 5, 1917. With reference to the Caucasian Education District, the Council proposes to nationalize the elementary and preparatory classes in secondary schools at the beginning of the school year. As for the classes, they will not be nationalized at the beginning of the school year, the council will issue a resolution to introduce them to the national subjects of enhanced and compulsory education. The national subjects can be understood as a native language, literature, history, and geography. In the 1917-1918 school year, the district commissariat set the following number of lessons in national subjects: 5 hours in the senior department of the preparatory class, 4 hours in classes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 3 hours per week in the other senior classes.

In 1918, the newspaper "Republic of Georgia" formulated all the principles on which the educational policy had to be based. At the same time, the newspaper criticized the negative consequences of Russian influence and called on the public to create a new educational space. "Our public education was even in a much worse situation: the native language was persecuted from schools; Elementary pedagogical needs were trampled underfoot. But whatever it was it went down in history. Now we have to take care of the future and take care of ourselves. All kinds of schools in our country need to be renewed and established on a new basis. The bureaucratic spirit and anti-pedagogical principles must be completely expelled from the school. It can be said definitively that a full nationalization of a state institution can only be realized via a renovated school. Therefore, the school and state education initially have to acquire a national image"¹⁴.

On May 3, 1919, at # 3220 #, the Ministry submitted a report to the Government on the provision of a scholarship for young people for one million rubles for special education abroad; With this project, it will be possible to send at least 83 young people abroad in the recent period, if each of them is allocated 12,000 rubles per year. By sending them, the current shortage of specialists/financiers, agronomists, engineers, etc. will be weakened a little and it will be possible shortly not to leave many responsible cases to specialists who are not nationally related to us. Our economic strengthening /prosperity resulted from technical development is beyond their interests and in state-building work, they either disappoint us or are less conscientious about building our economy on solid ground"¹⁵.

On July 8, 1919, the Constituent Assembly of Georgia sent 75 scholarship holders abroad and distributed them in the following countries: Forty were sent to Berlin and the rest cities of Germany; Eleven to Paris, twelve to French cities: Grenoble and Montpellier, one to Belgium, one to America, five to England and five to Italy¹⁶.

¹² Nationalism and Democratic Interests, Tbilisi, p. 146

¹³ Journal, Education, 1917, #6-7, p. 4

¹⁴ Newspaper, Republic of Georgia, 1918, #40, p. 3

¹⁵ CSAG 1935, census 1, Acts. #54, sheet 11

¹⁶ CSAG 1935, census 1, Acts. # 35, sheet. 11

It's noteworthy to mention the memorandum/address of Delph - the legate, sent in 1919 expressing the desire of the Roman throne to spread professional and technical knowledge in our country. The people who were very close to the progress of European technical culture and were known for their initiatives could really benefit in this regard. "Therefore, in terms of public education, this initiative should not be hindered, it is only necessary to mention the foundations on which it is desirable and possible to build the school work of the Roman throne mission in our country. 1. The opening of the school must take place, obviously under the existing general rule, which is obligatory for the schools of the Republic. 2. the rights of these schools must fulfill the requirements to which all private schools in the country are subjected"¹⁷.

The address of the Head of the Information Department of the Ministry of Education to the Minister of Education on March 10, 1920, states: "The Chairman of our Mission in Constantinople is interested if the Ministry of Education took all measures to introduce as compulsory subjects the History of the Caucasus, Political and Economic Geography of the Caucasus, Iran, and Turkey and the languages of our neighbors. In response to this, it was stated that the history of Georgian nations and countries, as well as political-economic geography, are taught in the schools of the Republic, as far as it is concerned with the past of Georgia and the pre-existing situation of our motherland.

We would also like to inform you that since January of this year, the Committee of School Reform, established with the Ministry of Education, has started systematic work to clarify the types, levels, and school curricula. Among other issues, the issue of teaching Eastern languages in Georgian schools is raised in the order of work. As for the schools of national minorities / Muslim, Armenian, etc. / appropriate national subjects/language, history and geography / are mandatory in each of them"¹⁸.

On June 17th of 1918, the board of the Union of Secondary School Teachers of Western Georgia opened summer courses for secondary and primary school teachers in the city of Kutaisi - in the Georgian language, Literature, History, and Geography of Georgia. The courses are intended for 150 students, 121 of whom have already been to Kutaisi and listened to lectures. The expenses of the two-month courses cost thirty thousand two hundred rubles (30 200 rubles)¹⁹.

Conclusion

After the restoration of Georgia's state independence in 1918, a completely new stage began in the country. Part of the science evaluates this chronological section positively, while part evaluates it negatively. The fact is that in 1918-1921 the country faced new challenges and after 117 years' loss of state independence the society began to live in a free country. It's worth mentioning, that the government of the First Republic of Georgia took maximal efforts to develop the domestic and foreign policy and establish a full-fledged state.

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